High Tide

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by TheVampireAvatar

Summary

Ludwig and Feli are as different as they can get. A merman and a human don't exactly match, and Feli knew this. They cannot coexist peacefully, that's always what Feli has been told. But after Ludwig saves Feli, he begins to think that some humans may be good. Maybe even worth seeing more than once...GerIta.

- Inspired by a work in an unrevealed collection

Chapter 1

It was calm under the surface of the ocean today. Not too bad currents, the fish were in a good mood and it was the perfect day to go out for a swim.

He only wished that he could be a little better with time.

Feliciano Vargas had been exploring the beach shore during high tide and had lost track of time. The water went back and he didn't realize it until his head was well over the water. By then he had to crawl to the water, but still couldn't seem to make it.

Currently, he was still trying to get back to the water. It was much harder than it looked and he was silently cursing the sand for being so troublesome, the sun for being so damn hot and bright, and the air for being so dry.

Feli, as his friends would call him, was a merman. He had a brilliant blue tail with fins not only on his tail, but on his arms as well. His tail fins had a black stripe going down the edges of them along with his arm fins. He even had gills on his neck that were begging for water.

He had once heard that merpeople had to stay in the water otherwise they would dry out. He didn't believe it, but his older brother and grandpa had told him never to test fate.

"...damn...land..." He manage to croaked out. It was getting very hot and even with the wet sand underneath him, he felt like a fish out of-

Well you get it.

He was so close to the water, to surviving, but before he could drag himself to the water, he heard a sound coming from behind him.

Panic filled his veins and he increased his already frantic moves to the water. He was trying to explore the shore for shells, that's where the best ones always were. During high tide it was safe, but as said earlier, he lost it.

"All...for the...shell." The blamed shell was in his hand still, glistening in the sunlight. It was beginning to get harder for the merman to scramble around, and he was desperate enough to start flopping around to get there faster.

There was that sound again! He quickly stopped thrashing around and turned. A for legged creature covered in hair was running around, screeching loudly. The beast must have been calling for backup because two others soon were following it, screeching even louder.

Feli screamed the best he could on land and out of water when the beasts ran up to him, growling and sniffing him all over.

As if his luck couldn't get any worse, Feli heard a human, a HUMAN, shouting something the direction the beasts had come from.

Said demons quickly backed off Feli and ran to their master. Feli looked over to where they were going and took a deep breath before continued trying to crawl back to the water.

The dogs rejoined their master on their daily walk he have them. Their master was known as Ludwig Beilschmidt, a German who moved here with his brother and grandfather after the accident all those years ago. He had bright blue eyes and matching blonde hair. Ludwig was tall and strong and hated the beach. Any type of water scared him and he didn't like being so close to it.

Today he only went on a walk here because something just felt like he should. As if destiny was calling him here. And who was he to question destiny?

Ludwig glanced around the waves crashing at his feet and he sighed. His dogs started to growl and bark, which gained his attention. He scanned the beach for anything out of the ordinary and saw a man trying to drag himself bag to the water. He instantly began to ran over, was this man trying to kill himself?!

But suddenly he jerked to a stop, finally seeing what was making his dogs act weird. This was no man, it was half man, half fish! He had fins on his tail and on his arms, cuts on his neck that were flapping on his skin, as if trying to breathe like a fish would.

"What the hell?!" He shouted, scaring the poor man even farther. "W-what are you?!"

The merman stopped thrashing to stare at the human. Wasn't it obvious? Feli was always told that humans knew about them through myths and folk tales. Was this human not properly educated?

"Water...need water...." He begged of the human. He needed to breathe again, and soon.

The German quietly examine the specimen. Of course, it could be a mermaid but it had no um...no chest...um...

Even the thought of boobs was making the man blush slightly at the awkward situation. He shook his head before grabbing one of the mans arms and began to pull him to the water

"Verdammt, you're heavy." Ludwig kept on pulling his fishy friend back into water. As soon as they were able to get water to reach his gills, Feli gasped as if he just came out of water. No being able to breathe properly, the efforts of dragging him into deep enough water were increased.

The German didn't even realize he was in the water until he was splashed with the mermaid tail as he raced away from shore, now free of his trap. once he did, however, he quickly made his way out of it and fell on the sand.

Ludwig wasn't sure what had happened, but as he continued to gulp air down, he knew in his mind he wanted to see that thing again.

"Mein gott...I've got to take it easy on beers..."

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Feli swam under the water as fast as he could, he needed to get home and he needed to get home now. He was a fast swimmer, one of the fastest. When he was a kid, he and the other kids would race. Even though he was, and still is, more on the small side, he always won. The kids always taunted him for being so scared most of the time, but his brother always stood up for him.

His brother, Lovino, was the opposite of him. He had a red tail, darker hair, even the curl was on the opposite side of his head. He was very tough and he knew how to make people bite eat their words. While he was only a couple minutes older than him, he acted like he was four years older instead of four minutes older.

The point was proven when he finally got to their cave, he was immediately shoved up against the cave wall. “Where the hell have you been?!”

Feli looked up to see his twin’s furious eyes glaring down at him. “Answer me, bastard! Where have you been?!”

“Ve~, hi fratello,” Feli answered nervously. “I was out exploring.”

“Exploring? Where? You were gone for hours,” Lovino let him go but he was holding onto him with his deadly glare. “Grandpa was so worried about you, stupido. What are you going to tell him?”

Feli looked down and ran a hand through his hair. “That I was exploring...I’m fine though, I promise.” Lovino looked like he was going to say more, but was interrupted by a voice coming from down the cave.

“Feli? Is that you?” It was their grandpa.They had lived with their grandfather ever since their parents died when they were barely even three. He had always made sure they knew they were loved and that they were safe.

“Si, grandpa, I’m home,” Feli smiled down the cave where he swam out to meet them. Their grandfather, Roma, while being their grandfather, was unusually hot. Having a silver tail, he was very muscular and still looked young, even though he was older than most. His hair still hasn’t even turned white.

“Where have you been? I was so worried about you.” Roma hugged him close. “You didn’t go up to the surface did you? You know I don’t like you being up there when it’s daylight.”

Their parents had died from humans. Ever since then, Roma had been very careful with his grandchildren. He did not like when they went up to the surface of the ocean, he felt like something would happen to them again.

Feli gave him an earnest smile and shook his head. “No, I didn’t go to the surface today. I was-”

“Exploring. That’s the same bullshit excuse you use every damn time you disappear. I want you to tell me what you were really doing, bastard!”

Feli slowly took a deep breath and nodded. “Yes, because that’s what I usually do.”

“But what took so long this time you dummy?”

Roma sighed and shook his head, “Enough you two. Feli, I know you like to explore the beaches to find any shells or something. Did you find anything today?” One of the best things about their grandpa, he didn’t push Feli. He made sure he was safe and that he did what he was told, but if Feli didn’t want to say something, he normally wouldn’t make him.

Feli smiled and held up the shell that he got before the human helped him back into the water. He liked it a lot, it was a normal shell, nothing special, with a few brown lines going down it. Shell collecting was a good hobby of his that he enjoyed doing often.

Roma looked amused when he saw the shell and held out his hand. “Oh, this one is pretty. Are you going to add it to your collection?”

Feli nodded and smiled, “Ve~ Yup!” After an awkward pause, he nodded before turning and leaving.

He swam to his collection across the cave and pretended not to hear the two family members discussing his ‘exploring.’ He knew that if they found out about the human, he wouldn’t be leaving the cave again for a very long time.

To distract himself, he studied his collection. He had to have at least a hundred different shells in his collection, ranging in color and size. He even had a purple one! Granted, he found it in some paint, but it was still purple nonetheless.

Feli looked up from his shells when he heard Antonio’s voice coming into their small home. “Hola chicos, how are you doing?” Antonio came up to Lovino and gave him a hug and a kiss on the neck before being shoved off. He just smiled and laughed at Lovino’s reaction.

Feli grinned. He liked his brother’s boyfriend. He was very pretty and very nice. He was stronger than the two Vargas brothers, but not as fast. He had a green tail, and like them, had fins on his arms.

Though he wished that he had somebody to love as well, he was happy for the two. He had wanted somebody to love for a long time and always thought it would be a beautiful girl with lots of jewelry and long hair. But he seemed to like guys more.

In fact, he thought about the man who saved him. He liked muscular guys and the human sure had muscles. Even though he was dragging him back into the water, he liked being held by him. He loved his eyes, the blue eyes like the ocean. He had such blonde hair that he never

seen before. Most of the merpeople where he lived had brown hair, nobody really had blonde hair. Even if they did it always turns darker in the water so it didn't really show.

Feli quickly shook his head and tried to focus on anything else. What fish is the fastest, how hard is it to get out of a current, where do the dolphins like to play, anything to distract him from thinking about the human.

After all, his parents were killed by humans. He felt like he broke an unspoken law to never allow a human to see you, which he had. To like one, even a little, was ten times as worse. What would his brother say? What about his grandfather?

No. He can't see the human again, he shouldn't. But Feli knew that he would see him again, he had to.

Ludwig was confused. And that was putting it very lightly.

After he got out of the water and caught his breath, he called his dogs back. Then they jogged back to his house. It was only a mile from where they were now, so it wasn't such a feat. His house was bigger than most, some would call it a mansion, others would just say it was a vacation home. To him, it was both. It was much larger than his old home and it was right by the ocean, so in a way it was a vacation home.

He was still wet from the ocean water when he walked through the door. His brother, who was usually very loud in every way possible, was quiet tonight. It frightened him to no end when it was like this. "Gilbert," Ludwig called through the house. "What are you doing?"

"I'm in the kitchen, bro," Gilbert called back. Gilbert was a very obnoxious man, but he had his times. When the accident happened, Gilbert managed to not only save him but help him through the rest. The funerals, where the two would end up, even holding him when he had nightmares. Older brothers were useful when it comes to that stuff.

Ludwig sighed and went into the kitchen to find his brother with his pet bird. Gilbert had named the bird, after his 'awesome self,' Gilbird and the two were always good buddies. He had gotten him a few years after they moved in and Ludwig had to admit they were a cute pair.

"Is grandfather home?" Ludwig asked his albino brother, who scoffed at the question.

"When was the last time he was? Three months ago?" He shook his head. "No, he isn't home."

Their grandfather would leave at random times without a goodbye for months, sometimes even years, without a word and then show up out of the blue as if he never left. He never spoke about where he went, what he did, or who he was with. Ludwig and Gilbert thought

that when he taken them in he would actually get close to the two, but he left a week after they arrived to his house.

They didn't see him for three years. He always supplied them with money and the bank automatically handled the bills. Mostly, it was just Ludwig and Gilbert at the house.

He wondered what Gilbert would have done if he was with him when he saw the...what was he anyway? A mermaid? He didn't have any uh...chest...stuff...so he was male then? Was there a thing like that? A merman? He didn't recall any stories about it. But he supposed that they had to reproduce some way. Even so, it was just fairytale stories, right?

Ludwig absentmindedly blushed as he thought of the merman. He was cute, even if he was out of breath. Why was he so heavy though? He didn't seem to be that heavy, but he weighed about as much as he could bench press, if not more. Ludwig wondered if he would ever see him again, would he remember him? Could he come onto land?

"...Ludwig? Did you hear me?" Gilbert was suddenly in front of him, waving his hand in front of Ludwig's face.

The blonde snapped out of his thoughts, sighed and pushed his hand out of his face. "Nein, what did you say?"

"The awesome me asked why you're so wet." His brother studied him before returning his attention to the bird. The bird chirped and flew up into his master's hair, seeming to like the nest it made.

Before he could filter his words, he babbled out,"I went to the ocean today and I had to help-" He stopped. Did he dare tell his brother? Would he try and hunt him down? For an unknown reason, he felt like he had to protect the merman from other humans. It didn't seem to trust him when it first saw him. It seemed frightened of him, actually.

Gilbert stopped playing with the bird and looked at Ludwig. "You had to help what? Was somebody drowning? You don't go into the water, ever since-"

"JA," he snapped, then cleared his throat. "Ja, I know. I had to help a uh...dolphin back into the water. Nobody was around and it had washed up on shore." It was the only thing he could think of to say on a single note and it was somewhat believable.

His brother only watched him for a minute before shrugging. "Whatever. Hey, later, I'm gonna go out drinking, you wanna come?"

Ludwig shook his head and quickly went to his room, "No thanks, Gilbert. Tell everybody I said hi though."

He shut the door to his room and sat down on the bed. With just a glance, he was able to see where exactly he had helped the merman back into the ocean. Was he okay? Did he get washed up somewhere else?

With a shake of his head, he laid down and crossed his legs. Whatever the case, he wanted to see him again. It was very crazy, but he seemed drawn to the creature. He would do anything to protect it from getting hurt.

Chapter End Notes

So I'm probably going to update this really quickly, it's like taking a mini-break from my other story
Hope you liked it :D

Chapter 3

The German sighed. It was a long day already and it wasn't even noon yet. The worst part was that he was alone. Gilbert hadn't come home from drinking last night. It wasn't unusual, he would just sleep over at his friends' house instead.

However, Ludwig hadn't gotten out of his bed yet. He was trying to delay the "getting up" part of this day. He didn't have a job, there was no need for one with all the bills paid already, so everyday he felt like he was on repeat. Get up, train, shower, walk dogs, come home, read, go to bed. Occasionally there would be a surprise event going on like if he went to the store.

He felt so alone. He didn't have a friend, never really had been good at making them. He did have good friends, but very few and he didn't really talk to them.

Did he have any friends? That...merman. He needed to name him. He had a blue t-tail, right? Maybe he could nickname him blue or something.

This was too weird. Way too weird. He was naming a merman. Naming. A. Merman.

Ludwig sighed. He rolled over on his side to steal a glance at the clock.

11:42. The blue numbers glared at him, as if upset at him for not enjoying the slow day. Even if it had been a very slow day, it wasn't fair to him that his thoughts were on "blue."

Was it normal to want to see somebody so foreign? So different? The German man sat up and stretched, shaking out the sleep that remained in his system. Enough was enough, it was time to get up.

He knew where he had to go.

Feli's tail fins twitched with anticipation to be used. He hadn't left the cave all morning and he was really wanting to get out. He hadn't really left since he got home yesterday. Not even to hunt for his breakfast.

Feli sighed. He was bored of this. Ever since he was helped back into the water he wanted to go back out. Just to see him again. He laughed at the irony. A fish out of water while in water.

Feli never really had a crush on anybody, forget about being in a real relationship with anybody. His brother had been in one or two, but Feli liked him with Antonio. He was really nice even with Lovino being...Lovino. Even if he wouldn't admit it, he knew that his brother loved Antonio back.

He looked up from stacking rocks on top of each other, a pastime he did whenever he was extremely bored or deep in thoughts. Lovino was out with Antonio and their grandfather would be out for a while longer, claiming not to be home until after dark.

He got up with a jolt when he realized something. With nobody home, nobody would see he left. With a guilty smile, he started swimming quickly to the beach he saw the human. He needed to call him something. Two legs seemed kinda mean. Maybe blondie? No...again, mean.

Feli smiled at the thought of his blonde. He was very strong, his arms were the size of his head! Even if he couldn't pick up a merman like him. He was so small, how could nobody pick him up? Especially somebody so strong like um....That human.

Note to self, Feli thought to himself as he swam towards the surface, create a nickname for the human.

One of the best things about living under water was breaking the surface. The water pressure didn't effect them, but to Feli he swore he could feel it lift off when he got close. The light looked so pretty when you're right below it. If you stayed a few feet below the surface for a while it felt like you're on top of the world.

Feli smiled as he stayed right below the surface for a moment. He remembered the first time he went to the surface.

He was just a toddler when he went up with his parents. It was so terrifying for him and Lovino. His parents tried to coax them out of the water by jumping out of the water and nudging them up.

Lovino eventually got annoyed by it and broke the surface just to make them stop. Feli stayed below the water, scared of the air above him. He only knew water his whole life and they wanted him to go into a literal new element. But if Lovino could do it, he could too right?

He slowly swam up and poked his finger trough the waves and felt air for the first time. It was too cold!! He quickly brought it back and swam down a few more feet. Why would anybody do that? It was so horrible.

Feli turned as he heard some dolphins come up next to the merpeople. He flinched as some of them jumped out of the water. But luckily, he wasn't the only one. A baby dolphin came up next to him and nuzzled his arm.

Feli smiled nervously and pat the dolphins head. The dolphins mom came up next to them and nudged her baby to the surface. The baby singing to his mother, Feli smiled. He hesitantly swam up to follow the baby dolphin and his family.

The first time he broke the surface he gasped. His gills instinctively flapped with no water around them. The sun was too hot and the air felt sticky. "Mommy?" He broke up his eyes and looked around. His mom smiled and picked him up, hugging and kissing him.

Nowadays, Feli would jump out of the surface like his parents would. It reminded him of that beautiful time. He missed his parents but he knew his grandfather still loved them.

Today he didn't jump out. Instead he slowly poked his head out of the water and looked around. He was on the right beach right? And he was sure he was far enough from being

beached again. Although, with the humans arms around him like that, it wouldn't be too bad...

Quickly he shook his head and tried to shake off his blush. He shouldn't be having these thoughts! If his brother, or even just his grandfather, found out he would be in so much trouble. Feli didn't even know what he would do. Maybe he could go live with the tropical merpeople over in the pacific. he heard that they were nice enough.

While Feli was in his thoughts, somebody came up to the beach. They weren't moving around, just standin there. The blonde was searching for somebody.

Feli spotted the same blonde from before and jumped back a few feet, startled at the sudden appearance. He smiled and went under to swim closer.

Ludwig went down onto the beach. He hated being so close to the water, but he did want to see Blue again. His eyes scanned the shore first, but with a relieved sigh, he didn't find anything. Then he searched out in the water. He found something out there and it looked like a man, but he shouldn't be out so far.

Then the man disappeared under the water. Ludwig gasped and stepped forward, worried for the man. "H-hey," he called out, "are you out there?"

Suddenly, the so called man reappeared much closer to the shore. But it wasn't the human as he thought. It was the merman! Ludwig stood there and gaped like a fish, mind suddenly turned blank.

The merman smiled and lifted his hand up and gave a small wave. Now that he could see him closer than before he had the chance to study him.

Feli smiled at the human. He knew he shouldn't be happy that the human was studying his fins and gills, but he couldn't help but blush under his watch. He tilted his head at Ludwig after a few minutes. "H-hello?"

Ludwig jumped back when he spoke. He looked like somebody had slapped him or something. Feli was confused, he knew that he could speak. He did ask him for help before, right? "What's your name?"

Ludwig gaped and swallowed hard. He didn't expect the merman to speak. He had totally forgotten that he asked for help before. Was it normal for him to freeze up like this?

Oh. The fish had asked him a question. Name? What's his name? He was unsure, but racked his brain. It couldn't be that hard to remember his name, right? It was uh...

So maybe it was hard to remember his own name.

Ludwig eventually cleared his throat and gave a shaky smile. "It's uh...L-Ludwig." Mission accomplished.

"Ludwig? That's a weird name. Mine is Feliciano, but you can call me Feli." Feli smiled back as if he's be born smiling all his life. It was practically a natural thing to do for him.

"Luddy, Luddy, where are you?"

Ludwig tuned out the voice calling out for him and continued to stare longingly at Feli. "Ludwig?" Feli asked, starting to get worried. "Ludwig who's that?"

Ludwig only listened and heard his brother's voice calling for him. Panic soon filled his own veins. If his brother ever saw Feli they'd have more trouble than they would ever need. Gilbert had a really good habit of not shutting up when he needs it.

"Ludwig! Bro where are you?" They both turned their head at the sound of Gilbert's voice followed by his footsteps. Ludwig gasped and turned to Feli.

"You need to leave, now! Hurry, before he sees you," he stepped into the water and gave a shooing motion. "Now!"

Feli jumped and turned around before turning back to Ludwig. "But what about you?"

Ludwig gave an amused smile, it made his heart melt, "it's just my stupid brother, I'll be okay."

Feli blanched when he saw a distant figure walking towards them and turned to Ludwig. "Will you be here tomorrow?"

Ludwig immediately nodded, "Of course. Just go, okay?"

Feli nodded and went back into the blue water, quickly disappearing from view. Ludwig sighed when he left and turned to his brother. "Hello, Gilbert."

"Bro! What were you doing on the beach? I went home and you weren't there." Gilbert came up to him and put a hand on his shoulder. "You're not trying to drown yourself are you?"

"Nein," he gently pushed his brothers hand off of him. "I'm just on a walk."

Chapter 4

For the next few weeks, the two had met up everyday. Even if they only could meet up for a short while everyday, the two loved their time together. Feli could hardly believe his luck, a human actually was nice and had kept his promise of meeting up everybody. Ludwig felt the same, only he was confused with the situation.

He went on a walk everyday, that hadn't changed. However, what has changed is that his new friend was a fish and he went to meet him everyday. Ludwig didn't even mind going in the water to meet him. He never went up higher than his knees though, which confused Feli to no end. Why would somebody only go into something so incredible for a short time and barely at that? He had tried convincing him to go in deeper before, but Ludwig profusely refused.

To try and make up for the distance between them, everyday Feli went closer to the shore. It worried Ludwig, but he assured Ludwig that he would be just fine. In all honesty, he was worried himself, but he was sure that Ludwig would help him. After all, he trusted him now. Despite him being a human, Feli trusted Ludwig with his life. It almost frightened him.

But everyday they continued to meet up, same time, same place, rain or shine. One day their meeting collided with high tide. Ludwig went up to his knees in the water and glanced down, worrying that Feli wouldn't be able to get close enough, and if he did he would get beached again.

"Feli, I don't ," Ludwig turned to his friend to see that he was sitting on the shore next to him. "What are you doing?!" Ludwig quickly grabbed his arm and started pulling him deeper into the water. "You can't be this close to the shore! You'll get stuck again and-"

"Ludwig stop it! I want to be here," Ludwig stopped pulling and looked at Feli. "It's okay, I'll leave when the water starts to go down again. I want to be this close to you."

Ludwig studied his fish friend and sighed. Said friend was giving him the "guppy" eyes and a cute smile. "Please, Ludwig? I promise I'll be fine." It was so tempting with that smile but...

"Fine. But only for a few seconds. Then we're going back in the water." Feli immediately perked up at the Germans words and nodded.

Even if they were only at knee length water, Feli was glad that Ludwig agreed to sit with him in the water. He got a chance to study Ludwig up close. His bright hair and eyes had always stood out to him and it was better up close. He had his hair pulled back and Feli wanted to mess it up oh so badly. His arms were just as he remembered, huge and strong. In fact, his entire body was like that. Well, as far as he could tell. Ludwig refused to take off any clothes. They always got wet if he sat down in the water like today, but he knew that Ludwig didn’t mind.

Feli beamed and continued to watch his friend. Whenever he got to see him his heart felt as if it were flying. Actually, whenever he thought about Ludwig his heart felt like it was going to burst. His chest always tightened and he felt so special. It was almost indescribable. He never

felt this way before about anything before, what was it? And of course he couldn't ask his family what this was because Ludwig was a human. Life was not fair to him, but being with Ludwig made up for it.

Ludwig had only seen Feli one this close before and he didn't have much time to study him. Ludwig watched his tail, it was different than what he thought it would be like, or in the movies. It had the basic shape, obviously, but it had something like side fins on it. Even on his arms, he had fins. It struck Ludwig as odd, but it was only uh..natural? He sighed and Ludwig tried to think of something to start a conversation. The answer practically slapped him in his face. He was just studying his tail, right? “Feli, could you tell me about what’s it like underwater?”

Feli was suspecting this question, but he wasn’t prepared for it. He looked up into the sky blue eyes and tried his hardest not to melt. His heart started to flutter, both from his feelings and from his nerves. Something in the back of his head started going off. He wasn’t suppose to be meeting this man, but to tell him information about merpeople? It was punishable by death.

Was it worth it? His hesitation seemed to speak for him, Ludwig seemed to get it and looked out to the sea. “I understand, you can’t tell me just yet. If you want I can tell you about what it’s like on land to even it out. Then,” he turned to Feli and placed a hand on his shoulder. “Maybe someday you can tell me what it’s like.”

Ludwig stopped talking and turned back to the water. Why was he being so nice to this guy? Normally, he didn’t care for anybody but himself but when he was with Feli it felt as if something...clicked? His chest tightened and he blushed when he thought about Feli, which was often. Did he like him? More than just a friend?

Feli blushed and shook his head, “I-it’s nothing against you, I promise! Please don’t hate me, I j-just don’t know if I can tell you, I’m so sorry, I don’t-” Ludwig cut him off by putting his finger to his lips, silencing them.

“Feli, do me a favor and shut up.” Feli gulped and nodded. “Thank you,” after he pulled his hand back he began talking again. “Nein, I understand. I don’t hate you, I just…” He sighed, it was harder than he thought to explain himself. It normally was like this, but he didn’t like not knowing what to say.

“Ve, wait, I have an idea! What if I show you?” Feli turned to him with a smile on his face, now excited.

Ludwig gave a confused look at the sound he always made and looked at Feli. “What are you talking about?”

“I mean I’ll take you out and we can look down into the water. I’ll make sure that you’ll stay above water and everything!” Feli grabbed his hand and started to try and go farther into the water.

Ludwig started to pull back and immediately got defensive. “NEIN! Feli, nein, stop!” He managed to pull his arm out of his hand and stepped back, then he gracefully tripped on his

legs and fell on to the shore. He shook his head furiously then avoided eye contact.

Feli gaped at him, struck by the reaction he received. He felt tears prick his eyes and he turned to avoid Ludwig seeing him crying. “I-if you really don’t like my idea, you just had to say so…” He turned and started back in the water.

Ludwig heard him on the brink of tears and looked up. “Wait, Feli. Don’t cry, I didn’t…” He sighed and looked down and muttered something. Feli sobbed and looked up.

“L-Ludwig?”

“I ca...can’t swim, Feli. I...Ich habe angst.” Feli looked confused at the foreign language and tilted his head. “I said,” he growled and closed his eyes. “I’m afraid. I don’t know how to swim and I’m afraid.”

“Ludwig, I don’t understand why you don’t know how to swim,” he giggled at the thought of somebody not knowing how to. “But I promise you I’ll keep you above water and if you really want I’ll hold your han..er..I’ll help you if you go under.” He blushed furiously and smiled sweetly. “Please, Ludwig? I have to go back in the water soon anyway. Pretty pretty please?”

Ludwig blushed slightly and considered the offer. He would actually be with Feli longer and he promised that nothing would happen to him. Deciding it would be okay for a minute, he went back into the sea water and went up to his hips. He was already starting to freak out and every nerve wanted him to turn back. But for Feli? He’d do anything.

Suddenly, a chilling thought stopped all others. What about the drop off? This beach had a very sudden drop off and some people have drowned here before. He gulped in fear, once he passed that point, he would be in open water. “Feli, the drop off isn’t that far from shore, what happens once we go farther?”

Feli smiled and swam up to him, taking his hand. “I’ll make sure nothing happens to you. I guess I can teach you how to swim or something? If nothing else we can just look beyond it or something,” he gave him a reassuring smile. “It’ll be fine.”

Ludwig thought it over for a minute more before nodding. Feli beamed even brighter and pulled him into the water. Ludwig was chest high in water and he gagged at the waves splashing in his face. “Mein gott, how do you live with all this water?”

Feli laughed and put his head down in the water. He snuck a glance at the human’s body and blushed. He shook his head and looked at the drop off, quickly approaching. Something down there moved quickly but before he could really find out what, Ludwig squeezed his hand. Feli brought his head back up and blinked. “What?”

“I asked what you were doing?” Ludwig seemed nervous and he was jumping on the sand now to avoid the waves. They were immensely bigger than the others closer to shore and even somebody as big and tall as he was would have trouble avoiding them.

“Ve~ I was checking where the drop off was. It’s right there,” he pointed to a place in the water as if it was clear as day where he was pointing. “So be ready!”

“Ja, I’ll try.” Ludwig mentally and physically prepared himself for going off, but as soon as he felt himself take a step into nothing, something grabbed his ankle and pulled him down. He tried to shout, but the water surrounded him before he could take another needed breath. Ludwig was being pulled down deep into the water by the thing that grabbed his ankle. He flailed around, trying to break free to no avail. Feli shot down after him and Ludwig wanted to gasp at the sight of his friend in water. He saw him above water, but never below. He looked beautiful. His hair all around in the current, all his fins in action, everything.

Feli went down under him and tried to pull the thing that was dragging him down off of him. “Lovino, get off!” Ludwig had never heard Feli shout like that and he was speaking just as he would above water. “Get off, please!” Ludwig’s lungs were bursting for air, begging to breathe. He could start to see the edges of his vision getting darker and fuzzy.

Feli tried to pull his brother off of Ludwig, who in turn shoved him off. “Get the hell off of me, bastard!” Feli was quickly getting desperate and grabbed his shoulders. Lovino turned and glared at him, “What are you doing!?” He let go of the human to shove his brother against the drop off. Lovino grabbed his neck and started to throttle it. “I’m trying to save you from the human, you stupid!”

Feli started to freak out and grabbed his wrists weakly. “Brother, I can’t breathe, I can’t breathe, I can’t breathe-”

Ludwig couldn’t fight the darkness enclosing him anymore and gave in, watching the bubbles rise to the surface before he went under the dark.

Ludwig watched helplessly as he thrashed underwater, trying to get to the surface. He thought about the accident, how he felt like this before and how he and his brother managed to get out. His parents took he and his brother out on a boat before to go fishing in the ocean. They were having such a good time until a sudden storm hit them and their small boat flipped over and sunk.

Ludwig recalled the fear that was in his veins, the pounding of his heart, the screams of the humans trapped in the water. His mom and dad tried to keep close to them, but the waves eventually pushed them away from each other. The only way Gilbert had managed to hold onto Ludwig was tying a rope to their wrists.

Ludwig didn’t remember much after that, just that a huge wave pushed them under the surface and they weren’t able to get back up with the waves continuing to push them farther down. He blacked out not shortly after. He woke up to the sun on their faces and Gilbert unconscious next to him. He sat up and cried out for his parents for about an hour before Gilbert woke up and held him while he cried. Their parents were never found, but they both knew what happened to them.

Ever since then, he’s been afraid of water and never liked being in pools, the beach, anything that people swam in, he hated going to. Not just because of the people, though that was a huge reason, but he hated the memory. Everything was just...horrible.

Until he met Feli, and even then he was very hesitant. And it proved to be, what would happen now? Would Gilbert be okay without him? Would he even find out about what happened? He wished he could even say a last goodbye to him. And to Feli, it wasn't his fault this happened.

Just before he totally went under, he could feel somebody grab his arm and feel the water around him move.

Feli managed to pry his brother off and quickly swam to Ludwig. He didn't know how to really help a human or anything, he just knew that humans couldn't breathe underwater. Ludwig's eyes were closed and he wasn't moving. Feli let out a small gasp and quickly latched his arms around his body and swam up. Ludwig was seriously heavy and he was having a hard time, but he managed to get him up over the drop off and continued to pull him up to the surface.

However, before he could get Ludwig up to the surface, Lovino grabbed Feli's tail and pulled him down. Feli gasped and tried to swim out of it and desperately pushed Ludwig up. He turned to Lovino and shook his head, "Fratello, no! I have to save him, please," Feli gave his best guppy face.

Lovino shook his head furiously, "No, I won't let you save a stupid human! He'll wake up and kill you!" Lovino dragged him down to eye level and growled, his eyes glowing with anger. To make sure he didn't escape he grabbed his shoulders tightly. "I'd rather you get eaten by a shark!"

Feli shook his head again, panic seeping in his heart. "Ve, I'm so sorry for this," he quickly slammed his head into his brothers, effectively making him let go of his shoulders. "I'll be back, promise!" He swam as fast as he could to Ludwig and grabbed his arm, finally bringing him to the surface. It didn't seem like he was waking up. Maybe he had to bring him to land?

Once he dragged him to the shore, high tide quickly leaving, he laid him on the sand. He had to practically drag the both of them up on the beach and even then it took military crawling to fully get on the sand. Once again beached, with the occasional small wave to splash over them, Feliciano watched Ludwig for any signs of movement. "Ludwig," he shook his friend's body desperately. "Ludwig, wake up. Please?" He tried his best to make sure that Ludwig was breathing. His chest was moving up and down, that was a good sign, right?

Feli soon felt the dryness from the sun and not enough water. He felt his gills flap on his skin, almost begging him to go back in the water. "Ludwig...please...wake up." Tears soon ran down his face and he crawled into Ludwig's arms. The last of the high tide was gone and even his tail fins couldn't touch the water.

Feli started to pant and he laid his head down onto Ludwig's chest. His parents were killed by humans, but would Feli actually die for a human? His eyes fluttered closed and he continued to make sure that Ludwig was breathing. He was tired and had no idea when Ludwig would wake up.

Chapter 5

When Ludwig woke up, he thought he had died. Immediately he wanted to cry. Why did he have to die when he was so young? He still wanted to do many things. He wanted to say goodbye to Gilbert, spend (a LOT) more time with Feliciano, actually learn to swim, maybe even get married if he ever found the right person. But now because he had died, he wouldn't be able to do any of that.

But something didn't seem right. There was something extremely heavy on him that was making it hard to breathe. Did the dead have to breathe as well? He always thought that when you died you would just ascend into wherever dead people ascended to.

When Ludwig opened his eyes and looked around at the silky white clouds in the sky, felt the sand and waves playing with his feet, and heard the birds screeching, he realized he was still alive. The relief of being alive numbed his senses and he gave a small chuckle. Everything would be okay now, he thought as he closed his eyes, Feli probably saved me. He went back into the water with the tide and he went home. He was safe, and so was Feli.

"Ludwig?"

His eyes shot open and he leaped forward, practially shoving his friend off of him. Feli had been lying on his chest until he woke up to make sure he was okay, but it seemed like something was off. "Feli," Ludwig grunted as he pushed him off fully. "Feli, what're you doing out of the water?" Panic laced his voice even as he tried to block it out.

"I wanted to make sure you were okay," Feli croaked. It was hard for him to breathe, let alone talk or move. "You were asleep for a while." The sound of his voice alone made Ludwig's heart break, the words just crushed him farther.

With an idea blooming, Ludwig shot towards the water while practically ripping his shirt off. He put his shirt into the water while Feli watched his muscular chest move. Let's not mix words here, Ludwig was hot. The way the sun and water hit his muscles made Feli's cheeks blush with admiration. The way that they moved was dazzling, he never really thought of humans like this. His blush darkened when he realize what he was doing. Thinking of something like this, and for a human.

He didn't even realize what Ludwig was doing until he placed the soaking wet shirt on his dried tail. Feli flinched at the sudden feeling of Ludwig gently running the shirt over his tail. "It's okay, I can do it."

"Nein!" Ludwig snapped and shoved his hands away. He looked up at the shocked face Feli was wearing and sighed uncomfortably. "Feliciano, please, let me, you almost could've..." he couldn't finish, horrified at the word. He was the reason why Feli had come up to save him from whatever drowned him. If he had just said no when Feli begged for him to swim, none of this would've happened.

Feli figured out what Ludwig was thinking and smiled gratefully. His hands found Ludwig's and gently pried the shirt from his fingers. "You're doing it wrong." He grabbed the shirt and put it on his gills. The cool water on them once more refreshed him and he looked back at Ludwig. "My gills are more important if I ever get too dry, then my tail, and after that my fins."

Ludwig sat there and watched the merman tend to his watery needs. "How would you know this?"

Feli placed the shirt on what water did reach him to get more and wrung it over his head. "I'm, uh, used to it I guess. This isn't the first time it's happened. I come up to the surface a lot, you see."

Ludwig sighed. He reached down to the water to splashed him a little bit. "Why would you purposely dry yourself up?"

"I don't! I just like to come up and collect shells and well," he paused uncertainly. "Well I like watching humans."

Ludwig turned to him in mild surprise. Feli was something different from what he could tell of other merpeople. Definitely different from the ones Feli spoke about. But as Ludwig thought about how different Feli was from his kind, he realized that he was the same. He didn't have many friends, he only ha a brother as a true companion, he was a wallflower, the list could and does go on.

Feli tossed the shirt back to Ludwig and gave a friendly, yet cautioned, smile. "Could you help me back into the water? I have to deal with my fratello, plus I already have been gone longer than I should."

Ludwig blinked and processed what he was asking before nodding his head. "Ja, alright. Sorry for all this."

Feli smiled at him and waved his worries off. "Ve, it's not a problem!"

The two grabbed hands and began to go deeper into the water. As soon as Feli felt the water surround his tail, he have a relieved sigh. The water seemed to heal his drying tail and made all the difference to his mood. Ludwig seemed to be doing okay, that's a plus too.

They were only about a quarter of the way there when Ludwig saw his brother walking down the shoreline. He hissed a curse under his breath and quickened his pace. "Hey, West!" Ludwig dropped Feli in frustration and cursed louder. "What're you doing here?" Gilbert waved his hand and jogged over to them.

Feli's face quickly turned to fear and looked at Ludwig. "Luddy? What do we do?"

The German could only glance down helplessly at his friend. "I don't know, I'm sorry." He looked up at his brother, now closing in on them. "I don't know."

Feli watched the new human with fear and adrenaline in his veins. He knew that Ludwig was a nice human, but it took weeks to build the trust. And even then, some of the things Ludwig did scared him. He had never seen this human before and now his life was in their mercy.

Gilbert jogged up to his brother and his friend (he assumed it was, after all Ludwig didn't hang out with people he wasn't close with) who were in the water. "Hey, you went into the water! Are you getting better of getting over your unawesome fear of-" he stopped short when he saw Feliciano.

Ludwig stepped closer to his brother and was getting ready to fight in case his brother got too close. "Bruder, this is my friend. He uh...he's different from you and me, um..." Ludwig struggled to think of what to say. "He's um..."

Gilbert blinked at Feli, the two never broke eye contact, and shook his head. "I'll be damned."

"Gilbert?" Ludwig looked at him bewildered. "What did you say?"

He shook his head and turned to Ludwig. "Can he get back into the water?"

Ludwig was stunned at how serious Gilbert was being, especially since he just found out about Feli. "Um, I, no, I mean, he can't, swim out?"

Gilbert rolled his eyes and started out towards him. When Ludwig remained where he was, he turned to him with a glare on his face. "Are you going to help or not?"

Ludwig narrowed his eyes and followed his brother to Feli. The two picked him and carried him into deeper water. Ludwig carefully held his tail while absentmindedly petting his scales. Feli smiled gently at this and twitched his fin at 'Luddy.'

Gilbert held his human half and was quite strong, almost as strong as Ludwig, if not stronger. He watched his brother and Feli carefully and sighed. "Are you okay?"

Feli turned to the new person and pursed his lips. He nodded and blushed shyly. "Y-yeah, I'm fine. Thanks."

Gilbert simply shrugged and continued deeper into the water. When he deemed it fit for him to be able to swim in, he wiggled out of their gasp. With a longing glance at Ludwig, Feli turned and went into the sparkling blue ocean water.

Ludwig sighed and watched the spot where Feli disappeared under, hoping that he would come back. When he didn't after a moment, he turned to his brother who was watching him. "What?"

"I need you to tell me everything you know about Feli."

Chapter 6

Ludwig carefully stared at his brother. How did he even know his name? It wasn't like Feli had introduced himself to Gilbert before, had he? But because Gilbert hadn't freaked out like he did, and he knew the merman's name, he had to know him somehow?

He crossed his arms over his chest and avoided Gilbert's gaze. "I don't know what you mean, I was only trying to help the creature back into the water."

"Cut the bullshit and tell me the truth," Gilbert stepped closer to him and gave a dark look, one Ludwig rarely saw. "What do you know about Feliciano?"

Ludwig uncrossed his arms and sighed. His brother didn't even need to see through his words this time. It was stupid to think he could pull that one off. He closed his eyes and shifted mindlessly in the tide. "I think we should have this conversation at the house."

Gilbert carefully studied his younger brother to try and find any lies behind his words before nodding. "Then let's go." Without waiting for a response, he turned and started to the house. Gilbert didn't even hear Ludwig say anything,only hearing his footsteps following him.

It was a very silent and awkward walk back to their house, and Ludwig swore he could feel his brother's anger seething through the air. Gilbert rarely got angry, but when he did you were in trouble. Before their grandfather came to get them, a child had bullied Ludwig where they were waiting, making fun of his German accent and looks, calling him names and making horrible jokes. Gilbert had enough of it, got pissed off, and had punched him so hard he broke his nose.

Once they reached their house, Gilbert took out a key and unlocked the door. He turned and waved Ludwig to go in. "Look West," he followed him inside and slammed the door, "I get that you have secrets. But now we have to be honest, okay?" Ludwig hesitantly nodded. "How the fuck do you know Feliciano?"

Ludwig glanced around the room, as if somewhere there was a hidden answer for this situation. "I helped him back into the water before." He finally muttered under his breath.

"And he magically got in trouble again? You'd think he had learned his lesson," Gilbert sneered as he went to the kitchen and brought out a beer.

"H-he did, but he wanted to see me again and," Ludwig stopped when his brother glared at him. "Gilbert, I know that you are angry-"

"I'm not angry, Ludwig!" Gilbert snapped. He set down his beer with a shaking hand and took a deep breath. "I..I just didn't think I'd ever see him again."

Ludwig creased his eyebrows and stepped towards Gilbert. "You saw him before?"

Gilbert shook his head and swallowed. Ludwig saw tears swimming in his eyes and carefully walked over. “Bruder, what’s wrong?”

“I saw him the night they died.”

Lightning flash above the two young boys in the water. The waves were starting to get wildly out of control and Gilbert was scared that he would lose his brother in the currents like their parents. “Ludwig! Hold on to me,” a young albino shouted over the wind. “I don’t want anything to happen to you!”

“Gilbert, I’m scared!” Ludwig cried back.

“Don’t be, I’m here. I promise, we’ll get out of this.” He flashed him a smile and grabbed his arm. “Now, swim.”

The two of them held onto each other for dear life, looking for land. The storm raged on, soaking the two even farther. The waves started to crash into each other as if it were a contest. Ludwig was struggling to keep up with his brother, but Gilbert made sure he was okay. “Come on, it can’t be much farther ahead!”

“Gil, I don’t see any land!”

“It’s okay, we’ll mak-” Gilbert stopped talking as a huge wave crashed over the two of them. It pushed them down deep into the water. Still grasping his hand tightly, Gilbert managed to push the two of them up to the surface, only to be pushed back down again into the water. Kicking his way back to the surface, Gilbert had pushed Ludwig along up to the surface to find that he was unconscious. “Ludwig? Luddy?! Luddy,” he shook his brother harshly. “Wake up!”

Gilbert started to cry and held onto his brother tightly, not even noticing the wave behind him forming until he was knocked into the water again, this time his sight darkening as well. With a grunt of determination, he began to try and fight the current, but to no luck. With no energy left, he wasn’t able to move as well as he could’ve. He continued to try until he felt nothing in his hands anymore. Shouting, and losing all of his remaining oxygen, he turned to find his brother had disappeared into the dark depths of the stormy water.

He began to panic and tried to search the water for anything, something, that would lead him to his brother. But the only effect that had was that he soon began to drown himself. He didn’t have any energy left to drag himself back to the surface for air, nor any air left to spare himself. His lungs were on fire and it felt like somebody was squeezing his head. The albino felt himself begin to drift off into the darkness when he saw a flash of something.

A young merman watched the two from nearby. He had saw their boat go down and wanted to investigate what had happened to the humans occupying it. When he saw the parents drift away from the children, he went after them to try and help them. The two adult humans shook their heads madly, screaming to save their children instead. They didn’t even question why a baby fish-boy had suddenly appeared, instead more concerned for their kids’ lives.

With a regretting glance to the humans, Feliciano swam back to where the kids were as fast as his young body could and saw that they had been pushed underwater. The one with silver hair was barely conscious while his brother, with very odd hair, was already gone. He paused for a second in his thoughts and tried to process why humans had such weird hair colors. He decided to save that thought for later and with a push of his tail, set off towards the two.

He grasped the younger one first then swam quickly to the conscious one. When he grabbed his hand, the boy's eyes widened in shock and he tried to say something, but Feli was too busy trying to pull their weight up to the surface. Gilbert tried to help, but with what little energy he had he wasn't much help.

Still, Feli smiled at him for trying and swam towards calmer waters. When he finally managed to get them to a safer place, he brought them up to the surface. Gilbert took a sharp inhale of air and coughed out the water that had been drowning his lungs. Feli gave Ludwig to him and watched as Gilbert checked to see if he was okay. Ludwig's heart was still beating and he was breathing, but it was labored. Gilbert turned to Feli and swallowed deeply. "D-do you know where any land is?"

Feli blinked slowly as he tried to remember where some was. He knew where they were, but it was a while before they could actually get to some land. It would be about a full night before they could reach anything.

Gilbert mistook his confused silence as not being able to understand him. "Of course you don't speak English, you're a fish, what would you know?"

Feli looked up and frowned. "I can speak English, I'm trying to think!"

Gilbert shrieked like a little girl who just saw a mouse. "It talked!"

Feli sighed deeply and shook his head. He grabbed Gilbert's shaking hand and started off towards the land. Gilbert was shaking his head and panicking so badly he cried.

After a few hours of treading water, Feli stopped and turned towards Gilbert and a still unconscious Ludwig. "The land is just over there," he pointed to the beach. "Do you think you can make it that far?"

Gilbert nodded and began to swim but stopped. "Wait," he turned to Feli once more. "What's your name?"

Feli grinned slightly. "Ve, Feliciano Vargas, but my friends call me Feli. What's yours?"

"I'm the awesome Gilbert. And this is my not so awesome of a brother, Luddy."

"Those are weird names."

"Says the fishy boy!"

The two of them laughed until an awkward silence took over them. Gilbert glanced towards the shore and back again. "Thank you for your help with this." Feli nodded and watched as Gilbert took them back to the shore before disappearing into the water.

A silence fell over the household as Ludwig watched his brother drink his beer awkwardly. Ludwig couldn't process this. Feliciano, his Feli, had saved him and his brother before when their parents had died? Gilbert had said that he brought him to the shore and waited until he woke up before he searched for somebody to help them. His brother...lied to him?

"Why didn't you tell me?" Gilbert looked up to see his brother glaring at him with his arms crossed. "You lied."

"No, I just left out some of the truth. Feliciano and I did take you back to the shore, but I said only I did."

Ludwig shook his head and left the room. "Ludwig, wait." Gilbert stood up and tried to go after his brother, but his only response was a door slamming from upstairs. He sighed and threw his beer bottle across the room. "This is so not awesome."

Feliciano Vargas was swimming faster than he ever had before. Not only did he attack his brother for a human, but he left with the human and he knew his brother had saw him go onto shore for him. Not only that, but when he went back into the water, his brother was gone. Meaning two things, one that Lovino was mad (but he always was anyway), or two that he had told Grandpa about this (which was another likely option).

When he finally reached their home he knew he was too late. His grandpa was waiting outside for him and he swam up so fast he nearly swam into Feli. His Grandfather brought him into a strong hug and began sobbing. Feli instantly felt the guilt seep into him as he awkwardly "stood" there. "Grandpa? Grandpa, I'm fine, I just-"

"I thought you died!" Roma sobbed. "When Lovino told me what happened and how you didn't come back for hours, I thought you were killed!"

He brought Feli out of the hug and grabbed his shoulders tightly. "Don't you ever do that again! Do you understand me? Never again!" He brought him back into a hug and squeezed tightly. "I don't want to lose you too."

Feli hugged him back and watched the light dance under the water for a bit as his grandpa babbled on about how dangerous that was, how risky it was, how he could've died, the usual speech he received when he was on shore or too close to the land for too long.

After a while, Roma released him from their embrace and let him be while he thought over the situation. While his grandfather was doing that, Feli tracked down Lovino. Something wasn't right, if Lovino had told Roma what had happened, things would've been different. He wouldn't be able to leave their cave if something like that had happened and Roma heard about it.

“Fratello,” Lovino called from his section of their cave. Feli swam over to him and watched his brother rise up, anger clearly written all over him. “What the hell was that?”

Feli took a deep breath and crossed his arms to try and look braver than he was. “I could ask you the same thing, why did you try and hurt Ludwig?”

“The human?” Lovino swam closer to him with his gills flapping angrily. “Why do you know that human’s name?”

Feli looked to the ground and rubbed his hair absentmindedly. “He’s uh...my friend.” At the look of his eyes widening, Feli realized his mistake and quickly tried to cover it up. “He wouldn’t ever hurt me, Lovino, he’s a nice guy! You would like him, really, he’s so nice and...and..”

His brother’s glare stunned him and he gulped. “Lovino, really, he wouldn’t do anything to hurt me. I swear.”

After a moment of tension, Lovino shook his head and raised his fist. Feli flinched and held up his arm to defend himself. Lovino shook his head and put it down. “If I ever see something like that again, I swear I’ll tell grandpa the truth, got it?” Feli nodded vigorously. “I protected you before and I sure as hell will do so later.”

Lovino swam past him without another word and Feli only glanced over his shoulder at him. He sighed in relief and swam over to his part of their cave. Once he rested on the sand, he smiled and finally relaxed. He had spent way too much time on land lately and he needed some rest.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

> Hello guys! Sorry for disappearing for a bit, school and my personal life are a little hectic right now. Thanks for sticking with it though!! :D

The bright sun blinded the German sitting on the beach. He had been waiting for his friend for over an hour already and he was getting somewhat worried. Usually, if he waited for over ten minutes he'd call for Feli and he would show up.

Not this time.

Ludwig was tempted to get a boat or something and go out, but he wouldn't know where to even start looking. The ocean was just so big that he was somewhat scared of the idea alone. The list of possibilities was endless-sinking, getting lost, drowning, getting eaten, and what scared him the most was another storm.

Ludwig sighed heavily and leaned back down on the sand. He had gotten used to the burning feeling and the rough texture of it long ago. After a while, even the sound of the waves crashing in front of him oddly comforted him. The warmth and sounds around him made him comfortable and he soon found his eyes begin to droop into sleep.

Just as he was about to completely fall asleep, he heard some shouting far off. He jumped with a jolt and immediately scanned the water. It was almost too easy to miss, but he eventually saw a hand waving to him far off in the distance.

At first, he blamed his off vision. Because he'd have been in the sun so long with his eyes closed, his vision was more green than any other color now. He furiously rubbed his eyes to try and get rid of it before he gave up in the task and stood.

His vision was still stuck on the weird camera mode when he saw the hand off in the distance again. Ludwig gasped to himself and quickly ran into the water without thinking about his fears.

When he realized what he was actually doing he stopped and tried to decide what to do. The once comforting waves were splashing on his shins and the cold temperature of them were just more proof that they were no longer comforting.

He quickly evaluated what he could do as an alternate root. There was some rocks that had made a barrier next to him. He had never really learned what they were called or what purpose they even served, but it was solid and something to walk on.

Ludwig marked the place where the hand was in his mind and turned to the rocks. It would be faster than just trying to swim and eventually drown.
The rocks had a rough surface and were dry to the touch. The rocks were so dull in color he felt his skin dry as though looks could touch.

With a grunt he pulled himself onto the dry rocks and immediately wished he brought shoes. The sand was hot but the rock was even worse. He sighed. It was just his luck. Ludwig shrugged it off and began to jog, minding the wet spots. He knew better to try and run on slippery surfaces.

When Ludwig couldn't spot the merman in the distance he felt his heart drop. Had Feliciano given up and left? He had waited for so long he almost prayed that he was still there. Maybe if he just got closer he could see him...

He edged towards the water, oblivious to the danger he was putting himself in. The waves splashed onto the rocks he was standing on, and one had wobbled a bit when the water retreated back into the ocean.

"Feli? Feliciano! Are you there?" Ludwig called desperately. "Answer me!"

He stepped forward again on the lose rock. The rock, predictably, gave out and pulled Ludwig into the water. He didn't even have time to give a shout before he went under. With a sharp pain in his ankle, he tried to kick up to the surface.

The pain immediately burned more and he glanced down to find a twisted ankle. He quickly began to panic and tried to get to the surface with just his hands. Although he was right next to the rock wall, he was in very deep and in such panic that it was although nothing was near.

Just as he was about to give up hope, two hands grabbed him around the chest and pulled him up to the surface. The air had never felt so good before as it had now that he could actually breathe.

After a few seconds of continuous coughing and panting, Ludwig glanced over to see none other than...nothing?

He was sure that something was there. After all if Feliciano hadn't saved him, what did?
"Feli," he asked with caution wrapped around his voice. "Feli are you there?"

"Ve, of course I am!"

Ludwig jumped from being startled like that. He turned around to see Feli next to him on the rocks. His tail was barely dipping into the water as he spread out on the rocks. Ludwig could almost hear the muscles stretching as Feliciano reached for the sky and leaned back. "Who else would save you, Luddy?"

Ludwig blushed at the nickname and coughed into his fist again awkwardly. "W-what are you doing up on land?"

With his eyes closed and arms behind his back? Feliciano looked like he was on vacation at the beach. The merman simply shrugged and laughed at his friends expression. "I can go on land, you know. A lot of the time I can't go too far without water but as long as my tail and gills are wet I'm fine."

Ludwig watched the tail shimmer in the sun. The blue scales were almost like his own eyes, only a few shades darker and it seemed to blend into a whitish color at the fins. Where the black was a tint of yellow followed. It reminded him of the forgetful fish in a movie he once saw years ago. His eyes tracked up the body to his belly. Feliciano wasn't very muscular but he had a few stray scales that dotted his skin. Under the rib cage it looked like a few scars. Ludwig grimaced at them and hoped that it was just an accident or something mild. The blue eyes continued tier way up to Feli's neck where his gills were flapping slowly. Without a constant water source constantly surrounding them they seemed almost confused. Ludwig leaned a bit closer before realizing that Feli had scales around his gills as well. They covered his back neck too and disappeared around his back. Ludwig was almost tempted to ask him to turn when a giggle caught his attention.

Feli had been shy to show Ludwig all of his body willingly but he supposed it was fine now. He watched Ludwig's eyes travel around his body and he felt his chest tighten. He had the entire attention of the person he had lov-er...liked the most. Definitely. Just friend wise. Just, with odd feelings.

Shaking his head he saw Ludwig staring at his gills. They flapped a bit faster in response to Feli feeling his heart lift up higher and he giggled a bit.

Ludwig watched the cute boy's face. It had a few freckles that had framed his face very well. If he had wanted to, he would’ve reached out and touch his face. Hold his cheek in his hand and kiss him gently on the lips.

He shook his head quickly. That wouldn't ever happen. Feli was a merman there was no way he had those feelings for him. There were mermaids down there for him anyway.

But Feliciano slowly reached out and held Ludwig's hand. The German blushed intensely and seemed to freeze on watching tier hands. Feli giggled again and slowly leaned towards Ludwig, closing his eyes softly.

Ludwig blushed even more as he contemplated on doing. Without even waiting to think, his body made a choice and began to lean back towards Feli, closing his eyes tightly in case something uh...happened.

Just as their lips were about to meet, Ludwig's ankle pierced him with pain again. He yelped and jumped back-which effectively ruined the moment.

Feli sighed and opened his eyes and looked down at Ludwig's foot. He gasped and jumped back. "You're...you're hurt!" He stated loudly.

The German cursed a stream of cuss words in his native tongue and glared at Feli. "Ja, I know!"

Feli creased his eye brows with worry and watched him try to get up. Feli gasped when he fell onto the ground after his leg not being able to take the weight. "Luddy?"

This was bad. His phone was with his things on the beach. He couldn't go get it, obviously, but he wouldn't dare ask Feli to bring him it. Besides, even if he did Feli would go through water to bring it back to him. And if you didn't already know, phones do not mix with water very well.

He was so deep in thought that he didn't realize Feli trying to gain his attention. He was watching him with deep concern in his eyes and looked like somebody had just popped his balloon. “Did you hear me, Ludwig?”

Ludwig blinked a couple of times and shook his head. “Nein, I'm sorry. What did you say?”

The merman pointed at his twisted ankle and shook his head slowly. “I haven't seen that on many humans before. Is that suppose to happen?” He looked back up at Ludwig's face. “Because if it is, humans are really weird.”

Ludwig sighed and counted to ten. He didn't really get annoyed with Feli all that much, but today was a very very different occasion. His patience was running very thin with all the pain he was in that moment. “No,” he whispered gently, if he said it any louder he would lose his temper. “No, it's not suppose to happen. I can't move on this.”

Feli seemed to understand what he was saying before joining him in thought. After a couple minutes he broke the silence with a very good question to think about. “How are you going to get home?”

Obviously, the answer was to call Gilbert, if he wasn't already drunk, and have him bring their truck down here. From there they could easily get him to the hospital and get a few days rest before coming back here to calm Feliciano from worrying too much. But to be simpler to Feli, Ludwig decided to tell him that he needs his phone instead. “What's a phone?”

Ludwig face palmed and groaned. “Feliciano, please listen to me.”He had the needed attention and continued on. “I need to get to the shore to call me bruder to come get me. I won't be able to come back for a while, but I promise you that I will and once I do I hope that we could,” he turned and blushed brightly to himself. “Hang out or something.”

“Ve, I'd like that a lot!”

“Great. But now we have to think of what we need to do to get me there.”

Feli only had one single logical answer to that:swim. If he couldn't walk, then Feli could just take him to the shore and try to help him from there. However, once he had recited his idea to Ludwig, the German got flustered and shook his head. “Nein, nein, I dont think that would be a very good idea, Feli.”

“Why not? It'd be very easy and you wouldn't have to move until you get on land.” Feli gave him the guppy eyes and made something close to a cat face. “Pleaaaase?”

Ludwig groaned and gritted his teeth together. On one hand he could just stay here with Feli and enjoy the day together with him. The cute boy was now batting his eyes at him to add to the effect of begging. But on the other hand he was in a lot of pain and knew that he needed to see a doctor.

The blonde groaned and nodded. “Fine, but be careful!”

“This was by far one of the worst ideas I have ever actually been in, and those usually go very very badly.”

“Aw, come on, it isn't that bad!”

Ludwig was sliding down the rocks carefully with Feli waiting to catch him in the water. Ludwig was hesitant at first, but now he was just against the idea. He usually got dragged into Gilbert's crazy schemes and almost always they would get into trouble. After a few years of this, he had developed something of a sixth sense. He would always get a feeling when a plan would go desperately wrong.

And it was going off right now.

“Nein, Feli. I won't do it. Maybe Gilbert will come down and see me.”

Feli sighed and rolled his eyes. “Gilbert might be drunking-”

“Drinking.” Ludwig automatically corrected with a hint of amusement. “And that is true...” He bit his lip, thinking for a moment before he sighed. “This is not a good idea.”
Slowly, he edged towards the water off the rocks. He winced when he had no more area to move to and let himself fall. Feli caught him, even though they both went underwater from the force and weight of Ludwig.

Feli was fine, he laughed actually when they went under. But Ludwig's face was not in amusement or joy, but in pain. He was holding his ankle tightly as if that would save him. Feli's face quickly turned from his usually smile to one of concern. “Luddy, are you okay?”

When Ludwig didn't respond, Feli took a hold of his arms and swam to the surface quickly. The human gasped when they broke the surface and coughed harshly to expel the water in his lungs.

“Luddy?” Ludwig turned to Feliciano. The brunet's face was in deep concern. “You okay?”

With effort, Ludwig managed to grunt and nod slowly. “Let's just get to the shore.” Feli nodded eagerly and slowly dragged them back. The waves helped push them to the shore, but it still took a lot of effort with the weight of Ludwig, and they both could tell. By the time they had actually managed to get to the shore, Feli started to rely more and more on Lugwig to get himself the rest of the way.

Once Ludwig had deemed himself on his own, he began to army crawl towards his bag. Luckily, it didn't lay too far, but it still took more effort to get his phone out and wait for his

obnoxious brother to pick up. He glanced over at Feliciano, who was sitting in the water, red faced.

“Hey, less awesome bruder! What's up?” Gilbert's voice boomed in his ear.

“Hello, Gilbert. I twisted my ankle. You need to come and pick me up.” He muttered into the phone. He hated asking for help and even more so from his brother.

“Oh, do tell. How did you manage that?”

“...It doesn't matter.”

“Does it have something to do with that fish?” Ludwig could hear his smirk through the phone. “Kesesesese! I'll be there in a few minutes, bro.” The phone call ended and Ludwig groaned. He could count on his brother, but sometimes it showed that he was the older one out of them.

Ludwig glanced over to Feli and saw him rub some of the water onto his gills and fins out of the water. He tilted his head but smirked anyway. Feli looked over and smiled in his adorable way. Feli giggled and waved to Ludwig, “What did he say?”

Ludwig shrugged. “He'll be here soon.” Feli nodded and smiled. “But, he wants to see you.”

Feli perked up and brightened up. “Really?”

“Ja, he won't stop bugging me about it. It's very annoying.” Ludwig's grin felt like it had been lifted even higher when Feli's did. 'He is so beautiful when he smiles,' Ludwig thought in his dreamy state of love.

Feli suddenly blushed and smiled into his hands. Ludwig backtracked. Did he say that out loud? Oh, gott, did he say that out loud?!

Before he could get an answer, Ludwig heard Gilbert's truck coming from the distance. Because they had a private beach on their grandfather's property, he didn't have to worry about anybody seeing the truck or the merman, or anything. And for once, he was relieved that nobody had to seem his brother come out to help him.

“Oh bruder!”

Ludwig rolled his eyes and looked over at Gilbert's truck driving up on the beach. He was leaning on the horn to make his arrival as loud as possible. Feli flinched at the sound and scooted back a bit in the water from the sound and the machine barreling towards them at such an alarming rate. Ludwig simply glared at his, once again, obnoxious brother, from a distance.

“Feli, you know Gilbert.”

Chapter 8

Gilbert watched the young merman splash around in the water carefully. It didn't take a Sherlock to realize that Feliciano was anxious. In fact, even John Watson could realize such an act. It had been, what, thirteen years since the incident? Ludwig had been seven at the time and he was twelve then. Now Ludwig was twenty and Gilbert himself was nearing his twenty sixth birthday. Feliciano was almost exactly the way he remembered him to be since he saw him as a kid. Granted, he had drank gallons of seawater, was exhausted, and had been terrified out of his pure white skin, but all the same, it was the same. The same hair, the same innocent eyes, the same creamy blue tail. Even the same curl was still there. It was incredible on how little he had changed.

So, with a smirk on his lips, Gilbert jumped out of the car and walked over to him. Feli scooted back a little bit with fear beginning to cloud his eyes. Gilbert mearly put his hands up gently and gave his best 'trust me' smile he could. "Whoa, whoa, easy there. Don't you remember me?" The albino was using his softest voice he was able to manage. One that Ludwig would hear when his brother was comforting him about his parents or a bad day. "You saved me and my bruder from the storm."

Feli scanned him up and down for any lies or things suspicious in his voice. Yet, nothing arose. He did look a little familiar. In fact, now that he mentioned it, even Ludwig seemed familiar. Yes! The blonde and the albino. With such an odd pair, Feli felt embarrassed to not recognize them immediately.

Ludwig glanced at his brother with confusion written all over his features. "Feliciano saves us? Since when?"

"It was you, alright. I'd never forget you." Gilbert continued on, choosing to ignore Ludwig. "Don't you remember, fish boy?" He began to become more like his usual self and flashed his awesome smile. "Or is it true that your brain is like a fish and you forget everything?"

Ludwig was about to punch his brother when he heard Feliciano laughing. With more confusion stacked on top of him, he turned and saw Feli grinning like a shark. "No way, of course I'd remember you." He pushed himself up with his arms and blinked at him (Ludwig swore he was flirting with his eyes). "But what about you, is it true that a human's brain is smaller than their fist? That's not really awesome if you ask me."

A silence overtook them as the waves crashed over the land and soaked Feli. Ludwig had absolutely no idea what was going on, but he didn't think it was good what either of them had said. Before he could even try to apologize on the others behalf, the two laughed and Gilbert ran out to him. "Feliciano Vargas, you didn't change a bit!"

Feli smiled and grabbed onto Gilbert's arms to the confusion of Ludwig. Gilbert lifted him up and spun around, laughing obnoxiously, quickly followed by Feli. Gilbert tripped over his feet, being the clumsy person that he is, and made the two of them fall into the water. Feliciano continued to laugh, even though he landed on Gilbert, who was lying face down in

the water. Seeing this, Ludwig had to resist the urge to run to his brother with his ankle injured. He was starting to get a little anxious with the two screwing around like that in the water and needed them to stop.

He stopped and thought about it calmly. They were only goofing around, it wasn't like they were going to do anything dangerous. Besides, Feli would help him out if anything happened, right? He felt good about this. In fact, Ludwig smirked to himself, he was about to shrug it off and get into the truck and drive off without his brother. Unfortunately, he looked over to the two again and almost screamed.

He was pretending to drown in the water. "Bruder! Get up right now!"

The two jumped at the viciousness in the voice coming from the blonde. Even Ludwig seemed to be stunned from it. Instead of his usual calm monotone, it was as though something else had spoken, or rather growled, for him.

Gilbert raised his hands slowly in surrender. "Whoa, bro, calm down. It's all good, we were just having some awesome fun."

The words only seemed to help at making him angrier. "You think this is a joke? Some fun in the sun?!"

"West, it doesn't even matter, we were playing-"

"Do you not remember mom and dad? How they were killed in the very water that you're pretending to drown in?! Did you even care when they died?!"

As soon as he said it, Ludwig realized he had gone too far. Gilbert's playful self was gone in that instant and he slowly stood up out of the water. His face was wiped of any emotion and it seemed as though nothing was even there, like he was just a shell of himself.

He walked up to Ludwig and stood there silently. His eyes were unfocused and were emotionless. Ludwig shook his head and closed his eyes before facing him again. "Gilbert, I-"

A punch to the face stopped him.

He quickly sent a hand to his upper cheek, where he was hit. He didn't even have the pride to look up to his brother. He didn't have to know what his face was full of now. Anger and disappointment.

"Of course I cared, you ass," Gilbert snarled. "I cared more than you will ever think."

With those being the only words he was willing to speak to the arschloch, Gilbert went to the other side of the truck and slid in. He started it and waited for his brother to get it. He had faded back into his depression like state and said nothing.

Ludwig looked at him for a few seconds before turning back to Feli. He was still sitting there in the waves, waiting and confused at what was going to happen. Ludwig frowned and sighed, "Feliciano, we'll be back tomorrow-"

"I'LL be back tomorrow. You have a twisted ankle." Gilbert snapped at Ludwig. Ludwig sat in the seat for a minute, in shock of his brother's outburst. He glanced over back at the merman to find he had left.

Gilbert started to drive and ignored Ludwig complaining about he not wearing a seatbelt. In fact, the albino German had completely ignored Ludwig until they got to the house.

Ludwig sighed and was about to get out of the car when the doors locked. It was going to be like this, wasn't it?

"What is it?" Ludwig sighed heavily.

"You know very damn well, what!" Gilbert still had his hands on the wheel and was gripping it quite tightly.

"Gil, you have to know I wasn't thinking-"

"Fucking right you weren't thinking!" He slammed his hands down and snapped his neck to his brother. "I had to be the awesome one, had to swim for miles with you to save us!"

"I know you did, but you pretending to drown-"

"I have the right to do so! I swam for miles and that shows how awesome I am and how I can swim just fine, thank you-"

"Then how do you know Feli?!" Ludwig snapped back at him.

Gilbert freezes and leaned back into his seat. He closed his eyes and frowned, running hands through his hair. He muttered something about needing a beer and turned to his brother. "I need to talk to you about something that happened."

After about twenty or so minutes of explaining all of this to his younger brother, Gilbert finally carried him into the house and set his brother down on the couch.

"Aaaaand that's why I want a beer right now."

Ludwig sighed and set his ankle on the pillow. "Gilbert, why didn't you tell me?"

"And what was I suppose to say? Hey, less awesome brother, I met a kid mermaid that helped us survive, isn't that great?" Gilbert popped open a beer from the fridge and shook his head. "Nein, I wasn't going to do that."

Ludwig and Gilbert sat in silence for a few moments before Ludwig looked back up at him. "I'm sorry I said that."

Gilbert shrugged. "Whatever. The awesome me forgives you."

Ludwig sighed and shook his head. "What about tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow I want to hang out with him."

Ludwig snapped his eyes at him and shook his head. "If you get drunk and blab about him-"

"Then they're going to think I'm drunk, stupid. Look, I just want to see him again. He's beautiful." He smirked and laughed. "And by you blushing, I think you already know that."

Ludwig groaned and rolled over. It was almost evening, but it had felt like it was only morning. He was tired and in pain. More than anything, he was just done with the day. And his brother. And the secrets told. Aaaand everything in general. "When we leave tomorrow I want to stay near the shore."

A sip of beer was the only reaponse he got from his brother.

Chapter 9

The next morning, Ludwig was awoken by Gilbert throwing himself onto his bed. "Bruder," he screeched. "Get off, now!"
His 'awesome' brother laughed obnoxiously and ran out of the room, saying something about getting up.

What Ludwig wanted to do all day was get some sleep, read his book, maybe work a bit in the yard, just generally enjoy the day and take it easy on his ankle. It was still throbbing and was a somewhat red color, despite the ice that they had put on top of it to stop the swelling. He had no experience with a twisted ankle and all he knew was that if you walk around it probably gets worse. Other than that, he didn't know what he was suppose to do. Wrap it up? But what he wanted to do was relax anyway, so it wouldn't matter. Besides, he had Gilbert to get him beer, ice, food, the remote, any damn thing he wanted.

What Ludwig actually did, however, was completely the opposite. His brother literally dragged him out of bed when he wouldn't wake up, then he had to walk to the cabinet to get pain meds-which wasn't pleasant, put on flip-flops, get to the car himself, then wait for Gilbert. And that was only the beginning of the day.

All the way to the beach, Gilbert was obviously nervous. His grip was so hard on the wheel his knuckles were whiter then his hair. His entire body seemed to be locked in place and only moved when he was turning the wheel or stepping on or off the pedals. Ludwig didn't know why he was so nervous. He was just fine yesterday. When he had asked about it, Gilbert just shrugged and claimed it was nothing.

Ludwig obviously didn't believe him, but let the subject drop for the sake of not dying from Gilbert's distracted driving. He was already a horrid driver and was even worse when he was distracted. Ludwig rubbed his head- the exact spot where a huge bump had been there recently. He had agreed to ride in the bed of the truck for the sake of room while Antonio and Francis sat in the spare seats.

Never was he going to repeat that mistake.

After a short drive, they arrived to the beach. The water was a nice blue-green and the waves were calm today. The air was, of course, salty, but you could smell the ocean on top of that. Birds squawked over head and all the kids would usually squawk back or call 'mine! mine! mine!' over and over again. There weren't any kids out yet though, despite it being summer. It was too early for them to be out. The surfers were at it though, but not on their beach. On the way to theirs they counted about seven. Gilbert loved to watch them wipeout so he always leaned on the horn to spook them.

When the two German brothers got out of the car, a gently breeze kissed them on the cheeks and followed them all the way to the water. Ludwig had to lean on Gil to the water then sat down next to him. It was a super nice day outside and he always cherished the quiet moments like these.

"So....Where the hell is he?"

But, of course, with Gilbert around it never lasted long.

"He will be here. He knows that we are coming."

The waves had started to tickle their feet softly. The clear water on the sand dragged the sand and shells around, making it a big foggy when it returned, but never failed to leave a design on the sand.

"But I thought he would've been here already. He's awesome enough to know when were coming, right?"

Ludwig sighed and turned to him, his face somewhat serious. "Gilbert, he's a merman. I doubt they have actual schedules or appointments. He will be here."

They waited a bit more in silence until Gilbert stood up and stretched out his back. "Well, this is fun and all, but fuck waiting. Can't you call him or something?"

Another sigh. "Gilbert, he wil be here. Can you sit down now?"

Gilbert rolled his eyes and groaned. He crouched down, but didn't actually sit down. His white hair had danced a bit in the wind and looked combed for once. His shirt was clean, free of any beer or chip stains and even more so, his shorts weren't torn up at all. The entire outfit was actually acceptable. Did he dress for the occasion?

"Gilbert," Ludwig started gently. "You aren't trying to um...flirt with him, right?" He managed to get that out just awkward enough for Gilbert to pick up what he was talking about.

"Kesesesesеses! No, don't you worry, you can date the fish." When he turned to look at Ludwig next and saw how badly he was blushing he fell over laughing. "Whoa, calm down!" The albino choked out. "You virgin, you're so worked up over nothing!"

"Stop it!" Ludwig snapped at his older brother. He hid his face in his hands and groaned loudly. "Shut up, I beg you."

"Hey guys!" A familiar voice filled the air around them and they looked up to see Feli riding a wave into shore. "How're you guys doing?"

"FELI!" Gilbert rushed over and met him in the water. Feli was unexpecting this and was all but tackled into the water.

"Gilbert, hey!" Feliciano actually smiled. "I'm so happy to see you again." He turned to Ludwig. "Is your uh...walk thing better?"

The blonde let a smirk slip by and shrugged. "It will heal in a few days."

Gilbert started to rumble on and on about the past years and how excited he was to see Feli again. Ludwig listened to some degree, mainly when the elder started to tell what happened

after he swam to the beach that night. Feli nodded with great interest and mentioned how thrilled he was that the two were okay.

After about an hour and a half of just talking, Gil gets up and stretches. "Well, sitting here has been awesome and stuff but I want to do something. Any suggestions?"

Ludwig and Feliciano shared a look before turning to Gilbert. "Well," Ludwig began. "Feliciano can't go anywhere on land and I have a twisted ankle. This is pretty much all we can do."

"Maybe when Luddy's healed up we can swim around!" Feliciano pipped up with a smile.

Gilbert groaned and sunk back to the ground. "But this is so booooring," he complained. "Can you at least show us your tail or something? That'd be interesting."

Feli immediately looked unsure and glanced around nervously. "I-I don't know."

Ludwig somewhat glared at Gilbert for being enough of himself to ask a personal question like that. It had taken weeks upon weeks for Ludwig to be able to see Feli's tail and that was with contact everyday. "He doesn't have to show us if he doesn't want to, Gilbert."

"N..No, it's okay," Feliciano stammered out. He scanned the waves and the beach for any bystanders. When he deemed it clear enough, he lifted his tail out of the water and placed it closer to the two on the sand "Just, be careful. Please."

Ludwig scooted closer to the water and gently reached out with his hand to touch the scales. He ran his fingers over them, as if it were an ice sculpture he was feeling instead of his very close friend's tail. In all honesty, he didn't really know what to think of the tail. It was very smooth. He expected the seperates scales to make it feel lumpier or rough at the least. Instead he felt like he was stroking the side of a regular trout.

The tail fin itself was what confused him. In some drawings people portrayed the tail to be almost like hair in the way that it could almost be curled around. In others the tail was flat as a board and couldn't be used other than to swim with. It was somewhat in the middle. Where the fin split and went the seperate ways, the tail was a bit stiffer and less flexible. But the further away from the tail, the more flexible it was.

Ludwig glanced up the body that was being examined and locked eyes with Feliciano. "Do you trust me?" He asked carefully.

Feli didn't even have to think about it. He nodded confidently and tried to think about why Ludwig had asked.

The answer was that Ludwig wanted to feel his gills. Feli had gills on his neck, but most merpeople had gills on their side closer to their lungs. With gills closer to the neck like Feli had, you could go faster. It had something to do with oxygen being obsorbed faster or something. He didn't really bother to listen when it was explained to him numerous times.

The German's rough hands genty went over the gills. It was unbelievable. The gaps kept opening and closing, searching for water. Feli grabbed the hand and brought it down to the water. "Get it wet, that way I can at least get water in." The hand went back up and the merman tried to relax his tense muscles.

Gilbert was in awe just as much as Ludwig. He had to watch all of this and wanted to ask questions. "Do you eat fish? What about seaweed? How do you fish have sex? Is it like you guys lay eggs and then jack o-"

"GILBERT!" Ludwig snapped, not wanting him to go farther. "Enough."

They glared at each other then turned to Feli slowly. "Feliciano?"

He looked extremely uncomfortable and awkward with the asked questions and was blushing red. "Well, I'm, uh. We eat variety of food, I guess. And uh...some-something like that. We have a breeding season I guess. But I'm not allowed to go to any yet."

"Why not?" Gilbert questioned. Feli looked old enough, Gilbert had his "mating season" numerous times.

"The mermaids get really aggressive during that time because they want their eggs to be uh...fertilized, I guess, first."

A silence took place and tension was in the air. For a few seconds it seemed as though the silence between them would last forever. That is, until Feli splashed his tailed around in the water, which effectively got all of them soaked.

The humans groaned slightly at getting wet, but Feli just laughed. "Sorry! I have to keep my tail and fins all wet. Otherwise I'll dry up."

As Feliciano laughed at his friends getting completely drenched, Lovino watched from the distance. He was worried what his brother was doing at the beach all the time and followed him today to see. And there his brother was, showing off himself like a prostitue. Humans could be very deceiving and could trick him easily.

Enough was enough. His parents were killed by humans and he refused to have his brother slaughtered too. Lovino ducked under the water and started to swim home. It was time to get help from their grandfather.

Back with the others, Feli was talking to them about how he hunts fish. They had already told him about fishing poles, which he thought was pitiful.

"All you have to do is swim faster then the fish and be able to follow after it. They dart all around, you see. Then you catch it with your hands," he held up his webbed fingers, "And boom! You caught a meal."

"But what if you wanted like a crab?" Gilbert asked curiously. They were all sitting in the water, the waves crashing into their bellies. All of them were either too muscular for it to bother them or used to the water.

"What do you mean? You just eat them."

"You don't take off their shells?"

"Of course not!" He smiled at them, showing off his teeth. "My teeth are so strong that the shells are nothing! It takes too much time and effort to try and get them off, anyway."

Gilbert nodded and Ludwig contined to watch far out into the water. He was listening, but something didn't feel right. It felt like something bad was coming. Maybe this was the calm before the storm.

Suddenly, something came out of the water. It looked human, so it might've been merpeople. "Feli, do you know who those people are?" Ludwig inquired. "I think I've seen them before."

Feli looked to where Ludwig was pointed and almost fainted. His grandfather and brother were watching them from a distance. They could see him with his human friends. Andreniline coursed through his veins. He was going to be in so much trouble. He felt like a kid caught smoking or drinking when he was way underage.

His grandpa seemed to be in shock. A mixture of disappointment, regret, fear, and sadness washed over the older male's face and he turned back into the water. His brother, on the other hand continued to scowl at Feliciano and stuck his nose up in the air at him. Feliciano could almost hear him cussing in his head.

He turned back to his human friends and swallowed tears. "I need to go home now." He gave them a small smile and tried to act like nothing was wrong when he got under water.

He had fucked up, badly. It was too late to fix any of that, but he had to get home before they hated him completely. Luckily, he had been swimming so fast that he actually met them on the way. "Guys! Stop! Please," he swam in front of his only two family members. "Please, I'm sorry!"

"If you were really sorry you wouldn't have gone back to them." Lovino shoved him back and kept swimming.

"Please, Lovino, forgive me." Feliciano pleaded. He was already starting to cry at the entire situation.

Lovino turned around and glared at his younger brother. "I tried to save you from the same human before and you attacked me. So no, I won't." He saw Feli open his mouth and snapped. "No! Don't talk to me. Talk to him."

He turned to his grandpa, who hadn't moved since they stopped. "Grandpa?"

"Why would you, Feliciano?" The elder asked. "I was so scared when Lovino had told me what you were doing. I wanted it to be another lie to get you in trouble."

Feli sobbed and tried to think of something that might help him out of this. "I always go to the surface though."

That struck a cord with Roma. "You do, don't you?"

"Si, si, I do!" Feliciano allowed himself hope. Maybe his grandfather would allow him to continue going up and he could continue to see Luddy."

"Then that changes now."

What.

"I forbid you from ever going back to the surface again. You will stay home or go out with one of us with you."

The world seemed to crash around the young merman. He wasn't allowed to go out at all. No more shells, no more jumping waves with dolphins, nothing. He couldn't even...he couldn't see his Luddy anymore. No more happy calms hitting his stomach when he thought of him. No more bubbles in him when Luddy smiled at Feli. Never again will he be able to be held in the muscular arms of his love. He always wanted to kiss him, but that means that Luddy would be his mate forever. Humans kissed each other all the time and it didn't really say anything sometimes.

Grandpa Roma continued on, regardless of the face Feli was wearing. "No, you'll have to be watched at all times now. No exceptions."

"No..." Feli started to sob and buried his face in his hands.

"Feliciano, I don't want you to end up like your mother. She was killed by humans, along with your father."

"But she felt trapped here! She went off on her own and she met dad!"

"But she died later because she left! Home is safe, home is human free, home is-"

"A prison! This place might not have walls, but you're going to start treating me like it does!"

"Because you need walls, Feli! You don't know what you're doing anymore! You act like everything in the world is good and peaceful, but guess what! It isn't! Everything kills so that they can survive and if you aren't careful you're going to end up like your mother!"

"I am not my mother!" Feli began shouting. "I am me! Nobody else! I know what happened to mom, and I don't care! You tell us everyday that we need to be careful but I don't care anymore! I want to be free!"

Grandpa Roma glared at his grandson. "You don't care? You don't care that my daughter died?"

Feli realized what he had said and guilt flooded him. "I didn't mean that, grandpa I just-"

"You take after your mother! How dare you speak like that! How dare you!"

"If I take after mom, let me go! I'll come back every once and awhile, I won't stay away-"

"If I let you go, I wouldn't be takin very good care of you, huh? I would be breaking my promise your parents made me make. I won't let you get hurt-"

"They didn't make that promise! You made it yourself after mom died because you feel like you couldn't save mom-"

SLAP.

Feliciano reeled back and held a hand to his now red cheek. His grandpa looked angry for a second, but realized then what he had done. "Feli? Feli, I'm sorry-" he reached out with a hand to make sure he was okay.

The hand was pushed back and Feli took off swimming. It was faster than before, faster then he thought he could go. He didn't want to be there anymore, couldn't be there anymore. He was done with it.

After a full minute of swimming, he realized e wasn't breathing. He turned around. Nobody was following him. He let himself cry. He needed to, it felt like his heart was being squeezed tightly.

Had he really said that to his grandpa? The guy who took them in after he heard of his parents' death? It felt like so long ago, he couldn't even remember fully what happened. He had blocked it out a long time ago.

He continued on swimming. It was to the direction of the beach. Something shiny caught his attention before he could get there.

He swam down to where a poor little fish was struggling in a net. The net had ropes leading up to the surface where a boat was putting by. Pity immediately filled Feli as he tried to get it out. The net was moving pretty quickly though, so it was hard to get out. Eventually, feliciano moved to the hole where the net was and reached in to get it.

Before he could though, the net pulled up sharply, catching his tail in the net. Panic filled his veins like ice and he started to thrash aroun to try to get it off. The fish got out of the net and sunk to the floor. It was a fake fish to try and get bigger fish, mainly sharks to come get it.

The hooks began to dig in his scales and he screamed loudly. He tried anyway to get away. Eventually, the ropes snapped and the net was full on in the water and around his tail. Feli tried to swim closer to the sand, anywhere closer to the beach he could get.

Soon enough, he found that he wasn't able to swim. He could barely even move in the water. He struggle to even get to the sandy bay near the bottom. He was going to wait until the boat left then he'd have to crawl to shore. Maybe Ludwig and Gilbert would be there soon.

As he crawled up onto the shore, he glanced back at the damaged tail. He could barely see his blue tail through all the netting. The hooks shimmered with the red of his blood and were only half visible. The other halves of the hooks were wedged into his tail. He sobbed back from the pain and realized with a sharp jolt when he moved the tail that he could die. Unless he was able to get help, very soon, he would die.

He couldn't swim, therefore, he could hunt. He couldn't oxygenate his water correctly. A lot of the time, they were like sharks. They had to keep moving. Of course, not constantly, but they needed to move eventually.

Before he could finish making a list of the terrible predicament he was in, a pair of human hands picked up his shoulders and heaved him out of the water. Where was the boat? If the humans in the boat had followed him to the shore, he wouldn't have to wait for his demise any longer.

The last thing that went through his mind as he was picked up was his grandfather's words. "If you aren't careful, you'll end up like your mother."

Chapter 10

Feliciano Vargas was in trouble. He had just ran away from his own home, managed to make his grandfather and brother furious at him for falling in love with a human. Humans had killed their parents, so he couldn't really blame them for getting upset. This only made him feel worse about leaving. But before he could sort out his feelings, he was stupid enough to feel pity for a fish stuck in a net. Welp, turned out that it wasn't a fish but a hook instead. He was caught in a net full of tiny hooks that dug into him and cut him pretty badly.

He managed to drag himself to shore no problem, but he was stuck. With his tail now rendered useless, he couldn't move. If he couldn't move, he wouldn't be able to eat or circulate oxygen in the water for his gills properly. Before our young merman could figure out what he was going to do, somebody had grabbed him and started pulling him out of the water onto shore.

Feli began thrashing around, trying desperately to fight his way out of there. The human's grab on him didn't lighten up at all. Feli was tired of fighting so much, but he had to put out just a little more energy if he wanted to get out of this mess alive. So, with the little energy he had left, he began to thrash around so hard the human had to let go.

Turned out to be a waste of energy. As soon as his tail started to hit the water or sand, the hooks either stung horribly or dug in deeper. Either which way, he screamed from the pain, his frustration, his fear, take your pick. From the blurry vision Feli had, he could see the human had backed away from him, which was about the only successful thing that Feli accomplished today.

"Whoa, whoa, calm down, Feli!" The human shouted over the shrill screams. "It's me! Gilbert!"

Feli stopped struggling at the human speaking and turned slowly at the name. "G-Gilbert?"

It was Gilbert! The pure white hair and the mis-colored eyes were the physical proof of that. That was really all Feli could see with the water and tears in his tired eyes. He had some blood on his face, but nothing as bad as his tail or other fins on him. He was beginning to get desperately exhausted from all of the events that took place so far.

"Ja, it's me. What happened to you, Feli?" Gilbert spoke with concern etched into his voice.

It was a moment before Feli was able to swallow the lump in his throat and speak. "A...a lot."

As Feliciano lied onto his back, he watched the sun dance with colors. The sun was starting to set, casting an orange curtain over the sky with the clouds lazily lying in the scarlet color. The seagulls were finally starting to shut up and disappear to their nesting grounds to rest for the night. Even the ocean was calming down from working all day and was setting in place evenly. All seemed to be at peace, except the red water surrounding the human helping the merman.

Gilbert watched the sunset with him and didn't ask any questions, right now it was more important that they get Feliciano some help, and fast. "Alright, Feli, can you help me?" Feli's blank stare answered the question for him. "No, I didn't think so. Hold on, let me get Ludwig."

"What? Why?" Feliciano reached out and grabbed Gilbert's sleeve. "I thought he was hurt."

"He is, but I need help carrying you."

Feli's face twisted into a fierce concerned face. "I can crawl over there."

"Feli, no. I need help and you are not going to do that. Not with those injuries," he gestured to all the hooks sticking out of his body, "besides. Ludwig is a big boy and can walk. It just hurts him a little bit, that's all."

Feli watched his albino friend sprint across the sand over to the truck the humans owned. He wanted to pull away his blurred gaze from the humans talking through the window and he really didn't want to see Gilbert having to help Ludwig out of the car. Even worse, he had to witness Ludwig's limping form coming ever so close to him.

The sand was too hot compared to the cool ocean water, which was barely splashing his tail. It was as if the ocean were trying to reach his tail to pull him back in. He didn't belong on land and he definitely didn't want to be in the ocean for a while. With a sigh, he watched his crush and his older brother race across the sand to reach him. It hurt to see Ludwig move like that, it really did. Feli had witnessed some fish swim a little weird before in his childhood, like that clown fish, but it was rare and never really happened.

He wasn't used to seeing anything with legs take a step and go down like they were about to fall. And it was even worse for him to see that thing with legs tripping was somebody he cared about. It was all his fault that it happened too, he didn't know that Ludwig could've ended up like that. He thought that after a few minutes Ludwig would've shaken it off. Most fish are like that. In fact, he had met a fish before who was up above water for over five minutes and was tossed back. The fish was fine after ten seconds of being in the water.

With the conclusion that humans were really weird and natural selection had yet to find them, Feli gave up the thought and focused on the nearing humans.

"Feliciano, are you okay?!" Ludwig fussed over him like a mother hen. "Your tail is-"

"I know," Feli croaked in pain. "I know."

Ludwig and Gilbert shared a look and scrunched their eyebrows up. The blonde studied his tail and sighed heavily. It was pretty cut and was bleeding just as bad."What are we going to do? It's not like we can tell somebody and get help down here." Ludwig muttered.

"We can always do it ourselves," Gilbert suggested.

Ludwig and Feli looked at him, one curious, one unamused. "Gilbert, we can't do that."

Gilbert crossed his arms and gave Ludwig a pointed look. “What else are we gonna do? Leave him here?”

Ludwig glared at him harshly and shook his head. “I am never going to do that,” he growled.

“So what else are we gonna do?”

Ludwig sighed and closed his eyes. He didn’t know what to do. He had never thought that something like this would’ve happened. He opened his eyes again and examined the cuts on his close friend’s body. It was scarred and red was filling the valley between each scale. His once beautiful tail was now mained and hooks stuck out everywhere. It was like a stab to the chest to see this. If it was possible, Ludwig would take the pain. Feliciano still had tears in his eyes and Ludwig’s heart soared with how proud he was that Feliciano wasn’t fussing.

But Gilbert was right, they couldn’t leave him there. Ludwig already stated that he was never going to leave him behind, and he was intending to follow that through.

With a final sigh, he glanced at his brother and locked eyes. “We’ll put him in the pool inside. You’ll fill it with salt water, no chlorine can be in that water, do you understand?”

“Drain it and refill it. Got it,” he cracked a smile. “How hard can that be for somebody as awesome as me?” He continued on about how that rhymed while Ludwig studied the tail again. “I’m going to take him to grandfather’s office to get all the hooks out.” He turned to the merman in pain. “Is there anything you need, Feliciano?”

“I can’t get dry,” he whimpered out. “I’ll die if I do.”

Stress was automatically stacked on Ludwig upon hearing this. “Right, okay. No drying out.” He wanted a bucket to pour water into. It would be fairly easily not to dry out if you had a bucket of water splashed on you every couple of seconds. But there was no bucket, and if the bucket fell over they were screwed.

Instead, Ludwig peeled off his shirt and placed it in the water for a few seconds, making sure that it was soaking wet. He pulled it back out and gently placed it on Feli’s tail. “We’ve got to get him back to the truck.”

“Right.” Gilbert placed his arms under Feli’s and lifted his upper body while Ludwig picked up the lower body. “Jesus, you are heavy. Lay off the meat for a while, okay?”

“Gilbert, now isn’t the time,” Ludwig strained out.

Feli was in a daze. Not only was Ludwig half naked, but he was carrying him. And in a way, Feli was wearing his shirt! It was a dream come true for the merman. All it had was a tad bit too much pain inside for his tastes. But it was definitely worth it. Every other step, Feli went down somewhat with Ludwig’s limping form. It felt weird, hurt a bit, and made him fear for his friend;s health, but he couldn’t really do anything.

Gilbert was leaning against the truck while fumbling for the tailgate handle. The added weight of Feli made it a bit harder to reach, but he managed to get it. Once he had it, he

pulled it open and jumped up, forcing Ludwig to take all of the merman's weight. Gilbert finally got back far enough before pulling Feli back into his arms and pulling him in. Ludwig grunted with the released weight and climbed up in with him.

"Will the shirt make it?" Ludwig asked the bleeding fish. "It's only a few minutes back to our house."

Feli nodded and winced from the pain. "Si, that's fine."

Ludwig nodded and sat down next to him. "You're going to be fine, Feliciano. I promise you."

None of them notice a figure in the distance watch with horror as the humans drove off with his grandson. He had watched Feli try and put up a fight, and he tried to get closer to him, but the human returned with reinforcements before he could. He had to watch the monsters drag his little Feliciano into their machine and drive off to heavens know where. The grandfather began to cry and keep ahold of the little hope he had for Feli. Roma knew something like this was going to happen...

Once they had gotten to the house, Gilbert had barely stopped the truck before jumping out and going over to the bed to see Ludwig holding Feli's hand tightly. Feli was starting to go unconscious from the blood loss, being out of water for so long, and from the intense buring pain. Ludwig was so scared that he might lose his friend, he started shouting at his brother to hurry his ass up and to help him.

They carried his unconscious body thought the house, blood dripping on the carpet everywhere they went. "Well, looks like if we lose him we can find him," Gilbert commented dryly.

"Shut up." Ludwig hissed. "I can't deal with you right now."

Gilbert sighed and carried Feli the rest of the way with Ludwig in silence. He could feel the fear coming off of Ludwig and wanted to help, but he knew the only real thing that would help now was if Feli was all better miraculously. Gilbert deemed that after he was put on the wooden desk of their grandfathers office it was a good time to go and fill the pool with the correct water.

Their pool was a decent sized pool, being inside and all. It was barely used by either of them, so it was clean-ish when he went in. The pool was the size of one that could be used by a high school, so it wasn't too bad. It had been placed in a room surrounded by a wall of windows that filled the room with sunlight or moonlight, it could be quite romantic if Gilbert ever brought a girl over.

Speaking of, he would have to take care of the smell before Ludwig got in there. Gilbert sighed and pulled the drain at the bottom. It would take a while for it to completely drain it, wash it out, fill it back up with salt water, clean the area around the pool, make everything

okay for Feli to use before he could go in, the list goes on. Gilbert really was not one for work and this list was way too long.

But Ludwig was the one who had to stitch up his soon to be boyfriend, and he had to bring him back down here once he was done. It wasn't very easy to hold Feli, that was just a plain fact. Gilbert felt bad for his brother who had to do all of that on a twisted ankle. That wasn't going to be fun to hear about at all.

He looked around at the floor. Things were spilled on the floor, some sticky thing was all over the chair (Gilbert blushed at that part), rubber ducks were scattered around. Yeah, it was a very good idea to hurry and clean all of this up before Ludwig and Feli got down there. It meant doing a lot of work, the top thing on Gilbert's "I don't do this" list. But, Gilbert groaned loudly as he got out the cleaning supplies, Feli saved them. It was just their turn to save him back.

Chapter 11

It had to be one of the hardest nights Ludwig had ever had to endure. The surgery had lasted what seemed like days for the worried blonde. In reality, it was just a few hours stretched out to stomp upon his already worried heart. He had to constantly keep the tail and other scaly parts of Feliciano wet with what water he could spare from a nearby bucket that Gilbert had fetched him when he realized that his friend was starting to get too dry. Not only that, but he had only taken basic biology in high school with some medical classes that were a mandatory thing for him a bit after his school career.

The hooks were evil little devils to get out of the tail. Some of them spiraled in and out of the flesh, others were broken and he had to search for the little tiny parts embedded in the tail. He had a hand towel nearby that he had to continuously wipe blood off onto. When he started with it, it was a soft blue in color, but by the time he had finished, it was a dark red that was dripping with blood. There were seventeen hooks that were whole sitting on a clothe nearby. They were nothing compared to the broken ones. Twenty-two big pieces, and about eighteen or so small pieces.

Feli had thankfully been unconscious during the entire thing. Ludwig really didn't want to see the flinching or the tears that came with these types of things. He could barely handle the ride home from the beach, let alone the entire thing. It had hurt him deeper than he could've possibly imagined. It felt like somebody was squeezing his heart to see how much it could take before it exploded with worry and concern.

Nevertheless, once the procedure was over, Ludwig had to wait for a beat or two before he was able to pick up Feli. The tail had some stitches in it that he would have to learn how to remove after he was in water for so long. But until he was able to get Feli to be in the water, he wrapped a wet, clean, towel around his injured lower half.

Once he had picked up Feli and brought him downstairs, Gilbert came up to help him through the doors and everything else. "What are we going to do now?" He asked with a hint of worry in his tone.

Ludwig grunted and began walking down into the pool with the tiled steps leading into the shallower end. "We'll have to take turns holding him in here. We can't let him swim until the stitches come out."

"Well, how long is that going to take?" The albino sighed and sat down on the side of the pool with his legs in.

Ludwig once again sighed. "A few days, I think." He shook his head and sat down on the lowest step. The salt water was well made, he would give his brother points for that. But would he really be able to rely on him for watching Feliciano? His ankle throbbed badly and he had to bite back a yawn. He was exhausted and didn't even want to think about how long this would take.

Considering everything that he had been through in the past few days, was this the right thing to do? If he had changed just a few things that he had done, maybe they wouldn't be in this position. Maybe if he had just ignored the merman on the beach all that time ago, they wouldn't have had to do anything like this at all in their human lives. But, taking in the fact that Feliciano had brought in such amazing light to his once dull life…. No, he had to save the merman on the beach. It was almost like he was destined to go there on that particular day to see that particular thing struggling.

It was an hour before he realized that he was nodding off. Gilbert was shaking his shoulder softly with a rare brotherly concern look in his face. "Hey, brosoff, you need to get some sleep. Especially if you wanna do an awesome job with this."

The blonde caretaker blinked heavily and yawned deeply. He glanced down at the sleeping angel in his arms and ran his fingers over the gills gently. He stayed like this for a few seconds before nodding slowly and shifted Feli over to Gilbert, who smiled trustingly...for once. "I'll be back in a while," he slurred and got out of the pool sloppily.

Ludwig had only been drunk a lot of times, and he felt drunk now. Instead of dragging his body over to his room where he normally would've slept off events like this, he made a makeshift bed by the pool with a towel and a plastic lounge chair. He watched Gilbert shifting Feliciano around so he would be a bit more comfortable for the upcoming hours in the water. But he supposed that it would be okay, Gilbert would be an okay brother for this one.

He stretched out, closed his eyes and watched the back of his eyelids for the rest of the day.

SPLASH

The blonde German woke up immediately and shot his head over to the right of him where Feli should've been. Instead, he found the merman gently swimming around with Gilbert holding him underneath. It looked like he was a parent teaching a toddler how to swim.

"What are you doing?" He demanded and sat up, resisting the urge to rub his tired eyes.

"He wanted to swim," Gilbert said easily-as if this wasn't a problem at all. "Who was I to deny him that awesome right?"

Feli looked up and waved gleefully at Ludwig. "Hiya, Luddy!"

Ludwig waved back automatically but kept his eyes focused on Gilbert. "What did I say about swimming?"

Gilbert cleared his throat and began to mock his brother in a too-deep-voice, "We cannot let him swim until the stitches move camp off of his tail!"

Ludwig took a very deep breath and counted off to ten to try and calm himself down. "No," He growled. "I said we can't let him swim until the stitches are taken out."

The albino barked a laugh loudly and startled Feli who was under the water at the time. A little splash accompanied Gilbert's playful face at his brother. "He isn't swimming. I'm just holding him and taking him around the pool."

"I thought it was a good idea to move the muscles a bit, yknow, just to flex out?" Feli said. "Is that okay?"

Ludwig sighed and shook his head. He supposed it was alright so long as he was only stretching. "Are you hungry?"

Feli smiled and his tail twitched at the mention of food. "Si! Do you have any fish?"

"I think so. How much do you eat?"

"About three good sized fish for a meal and two small or a big one alone could be a good snack. Maybe a crab or something." He licked his lips at just the thought of the taste he imagined.

Gilbert and Ludwig shared a look. It wasn't uncommon to buy fish so close to the coast, but it would look weird if they were to buy enough to feed an entire merman for as long as he would need to stay. Not only that, but he would eat it raw making it only more strange for them to buy a full bag of raw fish.

"Do you like tuna?" Gilbert suggested. "Maybe we could have you try a tuna sandwich instead of eating it raw."

Ten minutes later, Feli was eating a tuna sandwich for the first time. He demanded a second one when he finished the first, then for a third. Eventually, Gilbert had to go to the store to buy more supplies.

A few days after that, Feli tried some pasta with shrimp on it. Gilbert had gotten it a few days ago when he was out with friends and didn't want to have it anymore, so he gave it to Feli. The merman immediately fell in love with the noodles and asked for more.

Ludwig had to drag him out of the water and place him on a towel right next to the pool when he took out the stitches. It wasn't that bad of a process, it just took a while for all of them to come out. Luckily it wasn't as bad as it was with the first operation, if it even counted as one, and lasted for little more than an hour.

Feli watched the entire procedure being done. He was fascinated with how the tools would work the way they did and would politely ask for a explanation of how each one worked. Ludwig even let him hold the ones he wasn't using and ask him to pass him which one he needed next.

When Feli was given the okay after they were done, he splashed around in the water with as much excitement as he could put into his actions. Gilbert and Ludwig watched him from their spots on the stairs as he did flips and other things in the water. At one point he even started to make weird noises that they assumed where how merpeople would communicate with each other.

"He looks happy to swim again." Gilbert noted.

"He missed it." Ludwig agreed.

"When do you think we should let him go home?"

Ludwig shrugged after a minute. "I don't know. I need to make sure that he's fully okay before I let him back. It shouldn't be much more than a week really, if that."

Gilbert nodded along. To be honest, none of the three wanted Feli to go back home. They all wanted to be together in one place instead of wing separated like this.

"You know what would be fun?" Gilbert asked, turning to Ludwig. "We should take him to the zoo and the aquarium."

Ludwig watched him with hesitant eyes. On one hand, he knew Feli would absolutely be thrilled about it all. They'd be able to show him more of their world and he would like to see parts of his own. On the other, there were many concerns about it. He'd have to watch out for humans and their prying eyes. Maybe they'd be able to hide it or something, but it'd still be weird to see a man in full clothes this time of year. How would they even get him to be continuously wet anyway? It took a lot just to get him to the house.

"Yeah, it would," he said gently. One thing is for sure, Ludwig didn't expect to agree with his brother on this.

Chapter 12

“A zoo?” Feli tilted his head in wonder and blinked curiously. “What's that? It sounds cool.”

“It's a place where humans keep animals so kids and other people can go see them.” Gilbert explained with his feet ankle deep in the water. He splashed some over to where his younger brother was sitting by the pool. He didn't really like getting in the water unless he had to for Feli. “We used to go with our parents all the time until the accident happened. It's actually really cool there, they have a bunch of awesome animals there, like elephants, giraffes, lions, I think they have some kangaroos now.”

Feliciano smiled his beautiful smile, which somehow always managed to perk Ludwig up. Before Ludwig could fully bask in it's glow, the fantasizing smile softened until it was almost gone. He spoke in logical sense, which somehow dragged Ludwig back to the present. “How would I be able to go?”

“Ah,” Gilbert stuck out his finger into the air. “That is where our fab-u-lous life comes in!” He laughed loudly and poked the confused Feliciano on his nose. “We'll say that our grandfather needs a wheelchair sometimes when he's too tired to walk around. Because he doesn't go out into town, it'll work. We'll give you the wheelchair and wrap your tail and stuff with a whole bunch of wet towels so you don't dry out and wrap those with blankets.”

“We'll also make sure that we go on a day that's pretty cold.” Ludwig interjected. “Or we'll attract attention.”

“It's the middle of summer, when do you think there will be a cold day?” Gilbert snickered and chuckled a bit. He turned to Feli with his face full of hope and excitement. “What do you think, Feli? Do you want to go?”

Feli thought about it and shrugged. “I don't see why not. That sounds like a lot of fun!” His smile grew to it's full size again and he turned to Ludwig. “You're coming too, right?”

“Yes, to both of them.” Ludwig nodded. He had his arms crossed and he flinched when Gilbert groaned loudly. “Oh, right, right, sorry.”

“What? What is it?” Feli looked between them. “Did you say something?”

“He ruined our surprise!” Gilbert groaned loudly and sighed quietly. “Do you know what an aquarium is, Feli?” At his puzzled expression, he went on. “Haha, I figured not. It's like a zoo, but instead of having land animals and a few water ones, it's mainly water ones. Like fish, sharks, you know, the works.”

Feli nearly shot out of the water and jumped back into the water full on. He swam a lap around the pool and made these weird sounds before coming back up. Only instead of him popping up where he was in front of Gilbert, he jumped up in front of Ludwig. Some of the water splashed onto his friend's body and he laughed. Ludwig had reflexively jumped a bit

back, but stopped when he heard the laughter, he stopped. The smile was enough to stun Ludwig, but the laughter itself...

Ludwig blushed heavily and tried not to let himself smile all too much. He failed. Feli's laughter was as hypnotizing as ever and he couldn't help but compare it to ringing bells in his head.

"Luddy? Did you hear me?" Feli's voice cut through his thoughts and Ludwig had to clear his thoat before he could properly form a legit statement.

"Nine, I, uh, I didn't hear what you um...what you said." He said quietly. "What did you say?"

Feli smiled softy and tilted his head to the side. His hair was soaking wet and some drops traveled down his face into the water. "I said," he beamed brightly and leaned closer to Luwdig. "We should go to the zoo and the acoo...akey...what was it?"

"An aquarium?" Ludwig let himself smile. "So you would be interested in going to that?"

Feliciano nodded and jumped back underwater and swam around in circles. The two brothers watched him, transfixed on his movements. They were very quick, yet graceful. His scales shined in every light that beamed through the water and reflected a soft blue green color into the water.

Ludwig had finally started to let him swim a bit more on his own after he showed signs that he was healing nicely. They figured instead of switching day and night shifts to hold Feli so he could sleep, they could simply put in a floating chair in there. It was easy enough to find a blow up version of it, Walmart sells it for cheap especially when it's summer. So now whenever Feli was tired or needed to take a break for swimming, he could just plop up on the chair and relax for a while.

Gilbert pulled the chair over to him and leaned into it, taking a break himself. "My awesome idea will work, Luddy." He pulled his red eyes over to his brother. "I promise nothing will happen to your fishy boyfriend."

Ludwig heard him, but didn't respond. He was watching Feli swim around happily that they were going to show him, ironically, part of their world. And maybe, just maybe, he could show them part of his without them having to get wet. The only part in this so far that had him concerned was the part that he wasn't bothering to correct the albino that Feli wasn't his boyfriend.

When the wheelchair finally arrived, Feli was dying to go see the zoo. Both of the humans refused to show him any pictures of zoos online-it would all have to be a surprise. Of course they had all the blankets and everything picked out to use for this. Ludwig wanted to bring a few water bottles in case the blankets dried out and Feli 'accidentally' spill over himself. The merman agreed with that idea; he seemed to agree to whatever idea would get him to the zoo the quickest.

As Gilbert got the wheelchair ready, Ludwig began the process of the scale covering. Feli was sitting in one of the side chairs with his tail flopping impatiently. "Will there be any fish?" He asked.

"Probably," Ludwig absenmindedly responded. His mind was occupied with continuously wrapping the blanket over his tail. The softest would go over the scales directly and they would build from there. He had even manage to get the merman to wear one of his shirts to appear more normal, though the fish kept shifting around in it. "Are you sure you want to do this?" Ludwig looked into his eyes to see if there was any indication of hesitation. "We could skip this just as easy."

"No, no, it's okay. Really, it is. I want to go, it's just," he paused to gather his words together. "Do you think people will know what I am?"

"Not with your disguise on. Plus even if they do, I won't let them near you." At Ludwig's words, Feli seemed to breathe easier and looked up at him confidently. "In fact, if they do find out they will have to be taken to the ocean."

That was the wrong thing to say. Feli frowned slightly with a pitiful sigh to go along with it. It was obvious that he longed to go rejoin his family in the deep blue, but it was also obvious that he wouldn't fair well until his tail heals. Once it does, they would take it back and everything would be alright once more.

"Are you ready yet?" Gilbert called from the car. "We're burning daylight!"

"Are we actually burning daylight, Ludwig?" Feli asked in wonder as he was carried bridal style to the car.

"Nein, it's just an expression humans use. It means that we are wasting time." He huffed as he dragged the heavy weight to the car. His ankle was still sore, but was getting immensely better.

"Oh."

The zoo wasn't too busy when their car pulled up to the entrance. It was mostly some adults and very young kids mixed in with teenagers who were dragged along. Most parents had to work weekdays so that helped with the crowd a bit.

Feliciano was entranced by all of the humans there and felt slightly uneasy, especially because he never seen so many humans at once and didn't know what could happen. A few kids who didn't know better, pointed and stared at them. Their parents quickly smiled apologetically and moved away, but once a kid waved to the 'man' in the wheelchair, Feli felt a bit better about himself.

The first animal they saw was the giraffe. It's the tallest animal on the earth, had big brown spots, a purple tongue, and small nubby horns that sat proudly on the top of their head. Feli was in awe at how big they were. It was so amusing watching him just gape at them and flick

his head between them to the giraffes. He practically begged the two companions to help him to feed the animal and almost screamed when one came up to eat a cracker thy bought. The purple tongue lazily reached out for the treat, twisting around slightly before Feli threw it at the poor animal. After laughing a bit, Gilbert handed him another one and Ludwig showed him how to properly feed one.

After three failed attempts, Feli eased up and held out his arm(though it was somewhat shaking). The giraffes tongue snatched it before Feli was prepared for it and the merman screamed loudly. People turned to stare curiously and the two humans laughed nervously as their friend had a breakdown.

"Do you have that walking around you guys all the time?" He asked them as they walked towards the elephants.

"Nein, I think they're in Africa mostly." Ludwig responded while nervously glancing around. So far they were okay and nobody was paying too much attention to the odd trio.

"Don't they have a bird exhibit?" Gilbert asked suddenly. "I wanted to show my awesome bird to the less awesome birds."

"You actually brought that pet of yours?"

"Of course I did! He wanted to see if there where any mates of his." Gilbert flashed his sharp teeth at his brother and patted his shoulder before turning away. "I'll meet up with you later, text me when you're ready."

Ludwig and Feliciano watched him walk up the hill to go and find the birds exhibit while Ludwig pulled up his phone to check the time. "He lasted about ten minutes. I win the bet."

The rest of the zoo exploration went rather well, Feliciano was amazed at how many things there were that he had never even imagined of in his wildest dreams. His favorite had to be either the flamingoes. One of them had walked right up to the edge of their exhibit and started squawking at him. He laughed before squawking back and the two of them had a small fight before the bird lost interest in them and found more in a nearby fish, which also caught Feli's attention.

Ludwig had to have Feli drop some water all over himself only twice so far but the bandages were quick to dry it up so he had to pour some over his scaly arms to help soothe it. Another issue they had was when a little kid asked Feli why he has covered in blankets when Ludwig was in the bathroom. He froze, but managed to break out the excuse of him covering up the injuries he didn't wan people to see. When the kid asked what had happened, Feli decided to tell her what had happened. "Well, I got caught in a bad fishing net and had to get surgery so I wouldn't loose my, uh, body. Now I'm covering it up so people won't see."

"I don't believe you. I bet you're just being mean and won't tell me."

After a brief pause, Feli laughed and nodded. "I think you're right."

They met up with Gilbert for lunch there, then they would see how busy the aquarium was. It was pretty busy most of the time and the best time to go was either on a school day, or right before closing. It was a big aquarium, just with lots of people it felt small. Their parents would bring them there after closing to see all the fish being fed and would run around the enormous space.

By the time that they ate, got Feli some more water, and stopped by the gift shop (at the handicapped's request) it was nearing mid afternoon. The two brothers knew from experience that this was the busiest part of the day, but called ahead regardless just to check.

"Gilbert, maybe we could call Kiku. He could probably get us in later than everybody else." Ludwig suggested when they were driving back to their house. "He works late today, doesn't he?"

"I dunno, he's your friend. You could always call anyway."

Ludwig turned around to face Feli in the backseat. "Would it be okay with you? If I called a friend so we could go later?"

Feli shrugged. "I don't really care, I just wanna go!"

His smile was all that Ludwig needed as confirmation.

Kiku turned out to be a lifesaver. Not only could he get them in later than they were open, but he convinced some of the trainers to let them be able to feed some of the animals after doing a trick or two.

They had returned to the house until the aquarium was closing around six o'clock. During that time, Ludwig slept by the side of the pool, Gilbert was watching tv in the living room and Feli simply relaxed on his floating chair. He felt bad at how much the two human brothers were doing simply for him, but at the same time he figured that he would do something in return for them. Maybe at the aquarium he would be able to tell them which ones were the tastiest fish or which ones were the fastest. It was small, but doable.

Suddenly, an idea occurred to him. He splashed his way over to Ludwig's side of the pool and gently flicked him with water. "Ludwig. Ludwig wake up!"

The blonde sighed and cracked open an eyelid. "Ja, what is it?" He sighed in a heavy German accent. He would always break into it once he was tired enough(which always made Feli feel just a tad worse).

"I know that you guys will be able to see what my world is like, but if it's anything like the zoo, you'll only see things behind cages." He sighed, exasperated. "What if you did that thing humans do where they can go underwater to see everything?"

Ludwig blinked his way out of his sloggish state. "You mean scubadiving?"

"I guess. I just have to hide from humans sometimes when they do it." He imitated a human breathing out of a mask and swimming around. "Like this."

"Ja, gerätetauchen. It's not my thing, I don't like water, remember?" He yawned greatly. "Plus you have to do a lot of work just to go."

"Pleaaaaase," Feli begged loudly. He gave his guppy eyes on and blinked rapidly. "I've been shown all around your world and I lived!" At the look of unamusement on Ludwig's face, he giggled. "At least promise me that you'll do it one day!"

"Yeah, yeah. I'll consider it."

Feli smiled and jumped off of the floatie into the water and swam around excitedly. Ludwig sighed and sat back down until his friend came back up and grinned ear to ear. "Thank you, Ludwig!"

Ludwig cracked a small smile and watched his "friend" swim around under the water. His heart was beginning to ache with this blissful feeling for the blissful man-no, merman.

The aquarium was huge when it was empty. Feli looked all around and was amazed at what all was there. He pointed out everything he could and could spot the fish hidden away by camouflage faster than they had ever seen. He would also pass by and the fish would stop, hesitate, then swim over to the glass to watch him wheel by in the wheelchair.

At one point, he had noticed and told the two humans to watch. He pointed at a fish and moved his finger around, the fish following it as if hypnotized. Them, he flicked his finger up and the fish jumped out of the water into another tank. The trio requested the author not to put what happened to the fish into here, so henceforth, you will be spared the details of what happened to "the fish that could."

Finally, it was fish feeding time. Kiku had to leave for something that had came up, but left them with some trainers. They were expecting some sort of problem to arise with Feliciano being in a wheelchair when they had to go around all the exhibits just to get to the water, but the trainers were used to medial equipment and chose an animal that was easy to feed: the whales.

Normal aquariums wouldn't dare to have whales in there, but this one had rescued a small baby whale that was injure and struggling with it's mother and would stay until it's injuries were healed. Immediately, the merman knew how it felt and sympathized. The exhibit had mainly a walkway above and some toys in there to keep the whale entertained. It would be released back to it's mother here soon and they wanted to make sure that it wasn't depressed when it goes back.

"All you do," the trainer explained with a smile. "Is throw a fish in, and Claire here will go after it." The trainer demonstrated By tossing a fish into the water and the whale chasing after it. "It's that simple."

Feli reached for the bucket and the lady handed it to him. He had to promise not to take any of the fish for himself before they went in and in return, they promised that he could have double the fish tomorrow. He reached into the slinky bucket and pulled out a fish the flopped

lifelessly around. When the trainer wasn't looking, he pulled off a fin and placed it onto his tongue.

Ludwig shook his head at him and pulled out a fish before quickly throwing it into the water. The whale chased after it and quickly gobbled it up. After it's bite sized snack, it turned to the humans and chirped loudly for more.

They continued to throw the fish at it, sometimes Claire would jump up a bit to catch it, until another trainer jogged up to them and said something to their trainer lady. "What? Seriously, again?" She groaned. "That makes three times this month."

"What's going on?" Ludwig asked.

"A smart ass squid escaped the cage again. I'll be back in like twenty minutes, do you think you guys will be okay until then?"

"Sure!" Feli grinned and did a poop imitation of the whale. "Take your time, okay?"

The lady smiled her thanks and quickly followed her male partner out of the room to take care of the current situation. As soon as they left, his poor imtimidation changed to a spot on one. The whale even seemed impressed by this and squealed loudly, which Feli responded with of his own.

They continued their conversation until the merman in disguise began makin clicks and incomprehensible sounds with his throat. The whale seemed to understand everything and whistled softly in pity, which matched the look on Feli's face. After a short nod from Feli, the whale disappeared under the water and swam away.

"What's going on?" Gilbert asked in awe. "What just happened?"

"She misses her mom back in the ocean. And her dad. Her entire pack she misses, really." Feli sighed again. "She wants to go home."

Ludwig and Gilbert shared a look and glanced at their friend. "Feli." Ludwig placed a hand on his shoulder. "You know that you'll go back soon, right?"

Feli nodded but continued to watch the baby under the two deep water. "I know. She knows that too, but to her it's different."

They watched in silence for a while before Feli bit the head off of a fish. "Hey guys?" Once he was sure he had their attention, he went on. "Thank you for today. I enjoyed it a lot and hope you did."

Gilbert chuckled again and took the beheaded fish out of his hand and shook his head. "Silly mermaid, fish are for kids!"

"What does that mean?"

"Another expression."

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

CONTEST!

Hey guys :D

So I want some fanart for my fics! Soooo, I decided to hold a contest. I'd like something from ANY of my fanfictions (new or old).

Here are the prizes:

*First place will get a fic that's over 5000-7000 word fic of any fandom that I'm aware of (i.e. I'm aware of Homestuck, but while I'm familiar with Free or Attack on Titan, I don't know enough to write something. You can talk to me about any specifics that you'd like.) You'll also get a drawing by me of something you'd like

*Second place will get a 3000-5000 word fic (Same rules applies)

*Third place will get a short 1000-2000 thousand word fic

And of course, I'll share all entries submitted! :D

Please submit to the TUMBLR made for this contest: http://tvafanartcontest.tumblr.com/

RULES:

*Must give me credit for my works. (Can be in the title, tags, description, etc.)

*Does not have to be SFW.

*Must have something to do with my fics(Example: don't just draw Ludwig in his normal uniform and normal setting. Draw him in the water or with mer!Feli on the beach together!)

Please send all entries to my inbox/submit box. If you have any questions, or any concerns, please send me an ask. I'll check this blog often and if you can't get in touch with me through here (for whatever reason) send me an ask through whatever site you found me on.

I'll set the deadline for November 20th- a little over a month from now.

Good luck guys :D

Feli was still at their house for two weeks after their visit to the animal exhibits. None of the three had wanted him to leave. Even though he was in the clear of being okay for a few days now, Ludwig still made sure he was well enough by sleeping with him by the pool. Gilbert had joked about bringing in a bed so that way they could do whatever they wanted down there. Feli had been confused about it at the time and wondered why Ludwig was blushing so much.

"Luddy, what are you thinking about?" An angelic voice charmed the blonde German out of his thoughts.

Ludwig smiled as he kicked the water with his feet. To be honest, Ludwig was thinking about how beautiful his crush was in the water. The moonlight was shining through the windows near the pool. It was dancing on the water surface and, more importantly, Feliciano's scales and fins. The delicate white mixing with the cool blue and black made it seem like everything was going to be okay. The gently hair curl was enough to curl Ludwig's emotions when it bounced after he surfaced. Everything, literally everything, was just so damn cute.

He used to think romance was stupid and that nobody actually experienced it, but really, he enjoyed this nice dream of eternal happiness.

"Just how uh...nice you look." Ludwig awkwardly smiled.

Feli giggled and shook his head. "You say that a lot. You look pretty nice yourself, you know? Chicks must dig you all the time." He added the last part a bit upset, but managed to hide it from the attention of the most important human to Feli. He didn't want to make him upset in anyway. Not after how he was treated in the past few days.

Ludwig shrugged his massive shoulders and sighed in thought. "I don't think anything of that. I already have my eyes on somebody."

Feli's heart was wrapped in an ice cold grip and crumbled piece by piece at that. Luddy liked somebody else? His human? What about his feelings towards him? He already put so much into this, risked so much, was that all for nothing? He could feel the tears forming already.

His brother was right. He shouldn't have ever gone back to see this stupid human.

Ludwig noticed his reaction and wondered briefly if he was hurt by this. He thought that Feli would be excited about it. What if Feli share the feelings? Could they actually be in a relationship together? They lived such different lives. Ludwig's heart began to beat faster at te thought of the two of them actually being in a relationship.

"Is it okay if I come in the water with you? I want to talk to you about something." He asked with a stone face, despite his chest about to explode.

Feli nodded and pushed back from the edge of the pool.

Ludwig frowned a bit and delicately stepped into the pool. Usually Feli would comment on how he needed to start swimming or something because he looked like a merman trying to

walk. But instead he simply avoided looking at Ludwig altogether.

"Feliciano, is everything okay?"

Feli merely nodded and tried to hold back all tears that threatened to escape. This was torture for him. Was he actually going to talk about this horrible person that stole his heart away?

"What are we going to do? You're okay and everything," The German trailed off. "Do you want to go home?"

"A little bit." His voice cracked a bit and Feli turned away to shed some tears that had betrayed him.

"Feli, is everything okay?" Ludwig asked more delicately. He knew that Feli was already upset, but what about? Ludwig was never good with feelings, especially when it came to somebody else's.

Feli furiously nodded with his back still to Ludwig. The last thing he wanted was to make him upset, especially when he's done all of this for some stupid fish. Ludwig Beilschmidt deserved to be happy with whoever this girl, or boy, was. Besides, they were human. Species should stay with species, right? The thought alone made him wrack another sob deeply.

Ludwig hesitated before placing a hand on his shoulder. It was a simple touch, but it was quickly shrugged off and more distance was put between them when Feli swam a few feet further from his grasp. Ludwig scrunched his eyebrows together tighter in furious concern. "Feli?"

"I'm fine!" Feliciano cried out and sobbed loudly, shocking both of them. "I'm okay, really." More tears fell down his face when he turned to face him and Ludwig saw them like it was the most horrible thing in the world.

Ludwig immediately stepped forward with concern carved in his eyes. "What's wrong?"

Feli shook his head and sobbed louder. "Niente, I'm fine."

Ludwig shook his head again and blinked, sighing in his head. "Please, tell me." His heart wouldn't be able to take much more of the torture the sobs wracked through the air. It hurt him physically to see his love like this. He wanted to find the cause of this horrible thing and make it feel what it made Feli was feeling. Along with some bruises, of course. He needed to protect Feli and his feelings no matter if it were a simple cut or a whale. He would protect him with his life.

"I, I don't want to get between you and your girlfriend," Feli weeped. "She's just really lucky, you know?"

What?

Ludwig stood in the lukewarm water with shock written on his face. Was Feli upset because...?

Oh.

Oh, yes!

His heart skipped a beat and it felt like joy had been injected into his veins. Ludwig dared to believe that somebody so perfect could be in love with him. If it were true, then he felt a bit bad because he was the one who was causing his love harm, but at the same time he couldn't care. Feli loved him. Feliciano Vargas was in love with him. Nothing could have made him happier even if he had the choice of anything in the world.

However, the only thing that Ludwig did to this unofficial confession was stand there with a dumbfounded look on his face. His cheeks and ears slowly made their way to a nice red color with some stuttering coming from his lips. He averted his eyes to the floor, the walls, anywhere that was not the merperson in question. Yes, on the inside he was screaming but on the outside it looked as though somebody had just publically humiliated him.

Feli soon caught on to what his reactions were and tears began to make their way down his face at a faster pace than before. At a faster speed, he began to shake slightly and speak at an impossible rate; "I'm sorry, Ludwig. I'm sorry, it's just I love you so much and I knew that you couldn't love me back and you got a girlfriend and she must be the best person in the world because you could only love the best and I'm just so so sorry, you can take me home-"

Without thinking, Ludwig stepped forward and reached his hands forward to cradle the merman's face. The beautiful brown eyes seemed to begin to panic a bit, but after seeing Ludwig's calm face and felt the tears being wiped away, they calmed down. The baby blue eyes of the German softened in return and a small smile took place on the blonde. This felt so natural, like the curves of his face were meant for the human's hand. "You have no idea what you're talking about."

"Of course I do! Don't tell me that you aren't in love with-" Feli began to pant with his heart just so recent, the pain was the displayed item in his voice, but was cut off sharply when Ludwig leaned forward quickly and pressed his lips to his own.

Ludwig was kissing him.

His human? Was, was kissing...him?! He had no idea that his heart could beat this fast. Was it healthy? What was going on? Feli was scared, he never ever been in a situation like this and didn't know what to do. He was always warned to stay away from humans, but here he was in one's house, kissing him. This wasn't right, no species should do this. He knew this this was so, so wrong, but..

Feli simply pushed back into the kiss and wrapped his arms around Ludwig's neck. The two of them continued to push against each other, only breaking contact for a brief pause of air. They both could feel the other's smile through their lips. They closed their eyes tightly and simply kissed in the moonlit water.

Feli had stopped crying and began grinning as wide as his lips would allow. His heart was feeling like it grew wings and was flying with excitement. All fear was gone and he was in love with the most perfect human. Nothing could ever break that feeling, and he knew that

they couldn't break this feeling now. This was real, this was true. Fuck the no species interbreeding rule, this was the best love example he could think of.

After a full minute of kissing, they broke and rested each other's head on the other's. Their eyes were still closed and both were too shy to open them quite yet. When the wet and dry noses rubbed against each other and Feli giggled lightly like bells again. His happiness was too infectious and Ludwig beamed. This was much easier than hiding his feelings.

"Ich liebe dich, Feliciano." He said roughly in German and kissed Feli's forehead gently.

Feli didn't respond, only jumped out of the water onto his human to hug him tighter. He needed to be closer to his love. He rubbed his head into the crook of Ludwig's neck gently so he wouldn't totally choke him altogether. "Ti amo, Ludwig!"

Ludwig gently fell into the surface of the water and rubbed Feli's small back fins. The two of them sighed happily in content. Feli watched his finger make tiny waves around in the water while listening to the strong heartbeat of his new mate. That thought alone surprised him over and he smiled a bit more. "Luddy, can I ask you something?"

"Anything." His deep voice rumbled in response.

"I want you to meet my family. I already met yours, do you think you could meet mine?" He lifted his head to put it on his chest. "I promise that they'll be nice!"

Ludwig had to paused to take in that he was serious."Feli, you're forgetting that I can't breathe or swim underwater." He gently began. "I don't think that it such a wise idea."

Feli seemed to deflate a bit then perked up at another idea hitting him. "Then I'll teach you how to swim!"

"You aren't already?" Ludwig smiled.

"Luddy, please! I'll teach you how to swim and then you'll go underwater and see my world!" Feli brightened up and went on before Ludwig had the chance to speak. "I got to see yours, almost all of it, the other day! I want you to see what mine is like." At Ludwig's hesitating look, he got up and grabbed his hand. "Please, please, please, promise me that you'll see my world someday." Feliciano said with his best guppy eyes.

Ludwig thought for a moment. Honestly, this man was changing him for the better. Already he would go into water with only somewhat hesitation. If Feli was there, there wouldn't be any in the first place. Now he'd be learning to swim and would probably be scuba-diving. If nothing else, he'd be able to spend more time with Feli than he already did.

"Please, Luddy?" Feli nudged him again to get an answer.

Ludwig smiled and kissed the hand holding his. "I promise."

It was the next morning when Ludwig woke up in the pool floatie with Feli still asleep in his arms. The floatie was meant for only one person, so they decided to share and maybe sleep on top of each other at one point. Not that either party minded too much.

He decided that it was fine if he simply slept for a few more minutes and closed his eyes again. Just as he did a camera clicking was heard and he snapped his eyes open. His brother was there, holding a camera and smirking like nothing else.

"Have a fun night, bro?"

Ludwig glared at him. "What do you want?"

Gilbert laughed. "We have to go to the store to stock up on more fish, come on."

"Why can't you handle it alone?" He growled and pulled Feli closer. Miraculously, he was still sleeping through all of this.

"Because I don't want to come home to see little fish babies swimming all around the pool." Gilbert made a face. "Now come on, the earlier we leave, the earlier you can go back to fucking your boyfriend."

Ludwig blushed deeply while getting up from the floatie. "We didn't do that. We just kissed." He tried not to meet his brothers ever watching eyes. "A lot."

"Well, then come on. I'm leaving with or without you and you won't want me to leave without you," he held up his phone and shook it tauntingly. "Do you?"

"You wouldn't put Feli in danger like that," Ludwig glared. "If you did I would kill you." He reached the end of the pool and climbed out with water soaked clothes clinging to his skin.

"Yeah, and the saddest part is I believe you." He went over to his brother and handed him a towel. "Oh and one thing?"

"What?" Ludwig nearly groaned.

"You'll want a different towel." Gilbert smirked at his confused face before pushing him back into the pool. "See ya at my awesome car, bro!"

Ludwig groaned, looked at Feli with an uneasy feeling one last time, then departed with his brother to the store. It wasn't too bad of a trip, in fact it was actually tolerable. The unease bothered him though and he pondered what it could be a thousand times over before trying to forget about it. Nothing could go wrong, he told himself. Even Gilbert had tried to console him by making off a list that usually set him off. None of the items were checked, so they both tried to get over it.

What really set off the feeling was the date that both brothers forgot. They had marked it on the calendar weeks ago when he called, but with all the recent events they didn't even notice. Usually they would have cleaned the house from top to bottom trying to get it ready for his arrival. Now with Feli there, they didn't usually use any of the usual rooms or do any of the usual chores. It was too late now. Today was the day that their grandfather was coming home announced, for once.

While the two young brothers were at the store, a sleek black car pulled into the driveway. A man with long blonde hair stepped out from the drivers seat and scanned the house for any

usage of his grandsons. It was pretty early, so if nothing else they could still be asleep.

Still, he expected better from them. They were grown men and didn't have to work. The least they could do would be wake up early to meet him when he came home for the first time in almost a year.

He slammed the car door, now aggravated, and crossed the yard to enter the house. He opened the door and was hit by the stench of fish. What the hell have the boys been doing that made such a smell? The man scowled and was about to set down his things down when he heard a splash coming from the pool. Ludwig doesn't even drink water without flinching and Gilbert wouldn't get up this early even if the house was burning down.

What the hell was that in the pool?

He grabbed a knife from his bag and slowly moved forward. He was used to attacks, but in his own house? This wasn't acceptable. No, this was far from it. He would gut the crazies who dared to enter his house. Nobody got away from him. He made sure of that.

The elder German turned the corner and held the knife to his chest. He listened for more sounds carefully hiding his sounds. When he heard another splash, he quickly ran into the room and had the knife pointed out towards the water. What he saw made him stop.

A blue mermaid was swimming around in the water. A very young one, by the looks of it. Something the man had not seen in a very long time.

Chapter 14

Feli was enjoying the time to himself. He was usually with his new mate, so being alone was a rare thing. The pool was big enough that he could simply swim around in it for a while and listen to his thoughts. He was missing his family terribly and felt bad about what happened with his grandfather. He really didn't mean to upset him about his mom. They don't usually talk about what happened with the boys' mom, or dad, for that matter. It was too painful for any of them to remember.

Feli sighed and rubbed his gills tenderly. With his neck being above water so much they didn't really get used as much. It wasn't technically a bad thing, at least as far as Feli knew. He didn't really ask all that many questions when it came to going above surface. Nobody liked going except him. Come to think of it, all the things he did were usually just by himself. Sure, he was a hit with the chicks and everything, but people thought he was weird or annoying. With Gilbert and Luddy he wasn't, but they were humans...

All these thoughts about his old life were depressing him quite a lot, actually. Maybe when Luddy gets back from the market, he could ask about going down to the beach with him? They could try to find his family and if they weren't there, he could just live with the two Germans. How things would be simpler if everybody would be nice to each other. Especially humans. Every monster took a human appearance. Even God's image was of humans. They were so full of themselves sometimes.

He wish things were simpler.

Just as he was swimming in his thoughts, a noise caught his attention. The brothers had only left a few minutes ago so they shouldn't be back for a while. The merman stopped moving and tried to listen for whatever made the noise. When he didn't hear anything after a few moment's pause, he poked his head out of the water to listen more clearly. It was nothing more than his eyes and ears, so not even his face was out of the water. Yet it didn't seem to matter when he spotted a human trying to hide. He couldn't get under the water fast enough.

A scream broke out and the human charged with a knife in his hand. Feli felt pure, unfiltered fear break into his chest and he quickly swam to the deepest part of the pool. It was only down to a few feet, so it didn't matter. The human dove into the water and began to expertly swim down to where Feli was.

Feli could only watch with horror as the human swam expertly near. How he wish that Luddy or his brother were here. They could easily take this human down with no effort at all. When the human got too close, Feli quickly swam away. He was faster than the human, so maybe he would be able to avoid him until help came back home?

He turned and watched as the human bobbed up to the surface for air and actually get out of the pool. It was actually pointless for the human to try and swim around after him. Especially in such a closed area, it wouldn't work. Feli tilted his head at this. Maybe this human wasn't

so stupid after all? Just to be on the safe side, he went back to the deep end and waited for movement to know if he was truly gone.

He wasn't good with telling time, but he knew it had to be at least three minutes. Every second felt like an hour was going by, a minute felt like a day. His heart was hammering in his ears and his gills flapped wildly, trying to keep up with his heart. His eyes were wide to try and see more, even if he was blinking rapidly to try to keep tears from escaping.

In a few minutes, he calmed himself down to the point to think rationally. The human had attack him in his element, if he went on the tile of the pool or anywhere out of water, he would be finished. He had to be careful. Finally, when he deemed it to be safe to at least check, he slowly went up to the surface. Like the time before, only half of his face poked out of the water. He couldn't see anything where he was looking. Everything looked calm and in order.

But before he had the chance to look the other way, a net descended onto him and entangled him. The immediate fear and adrenaline took place as he began to scream and thrash around in the net. Like before, he couldn't figure out how to escape this trap. His fingers fit through the holes and held onto the rope. He began to scan for a way out. His heart was beating too fast, his entire body began to shake with fear, he couldn't breathe, oh god, he could barely think. Everything seemed to shut down in his mind to try and escape without reason. All he could think was how he was going to die.

Suddenly, sharp hands grabbed him tightly and hoisted him up out of the water onto the floor. His tail splashed the water in efforts to escape. He couldn't get back into the water with how far he was out. The human was grunting with effort to try and keep him grounded and Feli screamed out louder.

The human cursed and grabbed the knife again. Feli only needed to see the shine on the blade to know where this was heading.

"No, no, please, no!" He began to shriek. Tears were running down his face and he couldn't seem to breathe anymore. He continued to plead for his pathetic life when the human brought the knife to his throat and tapped his skin. He whimpered and more so focused on crying instead of begging. The knife moved away from his neck and instead went to the scales on his tail fin. He felt the knife tip dig into this flesh and he cried out in pain.

"No!"

He began to yelp and bawl, thrashed around, anything to help him escape. The human was merciless and brought up a cut scale from his body. "Was that so bad?" The devil smirked and brought his knife down again. "Let's get a few more, shall we?"

"No, no please!" He cried out and tried to grab the hands. The human just laughed. Feli shrieked loudly and tried to breathe.

"Ludwig, help!" Feliciano thrashed as much as he was able to. "Luddy!"

Feli began to scream more and wiggle about. He closed his eyes and braced for the incoming pain and thought of his mom and dad. Did they have to go through something similar to this? He was just about to pass out when the demon was knocked off of Feli and thrown into the pool. The loss of weight and pain brought Feli to open his eyes to see a furious Ludwig above him with his fists clenched.

"Luddy," Feli cried out and reached for his hand. Hope swelled in his chest at the sight of his mate.

Gilbert was suddenly by his side. "Feli, let's go, ja?" He tore off the net of him and put an arm around the petrified merman. "It's okay."

Feli sobbed and tried to watch Ludwig. The man was shouting at Ludwig, which Ludwig was shouting back at just as easily. Did he know him? Who was the man? Thoughts whipped around his mind as Gilbert hoisted him into his arms and carried him away from the scene.

"...Feli? Feli, can you hear me?"

The merman blinked heavy tears away and tried to focus on the worried tone of Ludwig's brother. "What?"

"Are you hurt?" Gilbert repeated. He had to push open the door with his shoulder due to the fact both arms were occupied by a heavy merman.

"M...my tail," Feli choked out. "Wh-what about L-Luddy?"

Gilbert shook his head and for once had a serious face on instead of the happy-go-lucky one he always bore. "He can handle himself, I assure you." He reached the truck and set him down on the open tailgate. "Let me see where you're hurt."

Feli managed to show him where his missing scale was, along with a small stream of blood dripping down. Because he wouldn't be able to produce another scale, there would be a small scar on his tail forever. It didn't really matter, it was just a scale, he had thousands more of where it came from. But it sure hurt like a bitch and wouldn't stop demanding his attention. The scale that was missing was about the size of a small coin.

"Alright, well, it looks like it'll be okay. You won't bleed out, will you?" Gilbert locked his eyes with Feli and exhaled a heavily sigh.

"No, I don't think so." He whispered. "I was so scared."

"I know, I'm so sorry, Feliciano. If we knew…" He shook his head. "You might be going into shock now, though."

Feli didn't know what that was and didn't really care. He also didn't know where Ludwig was. Shouldn't he be here now? "Gilbert, where's Ludwig?"

"I don't know, Feli. I'm sure he'll be here any second though, my awesome little brother is a very strong thing." He laughed his signature laugh and turned serious when a sound reached his ears.

Feli tilted his head and was about to ask what he was doing when the front door slammed open. Ludwig ran down the yard and almost slammed into the truck. "Gilbert, you drive."

Gilbert didn't respond and went up to the driver's seat. Ludwig turned to Feli and checked him over for injuries. "Are you..okay?"

Feli nodded. "I'm fine."

Ludwig picked him up and gently scooted them back into the bed of the truck. They didn't say anything as Gilbert drove them. Feli closed his eyes and held onto Ludwig tightly. He was so terrified that he wasn't going to be able to hold him ever again.

Out of everything, he felt guilt. It was his fault he had to live there in the first place, that wasn't fair to anybody, especially the brothers. To make it worse his family probably already left or hated him. Everything was just so hard lately. "Ludwig, I'm sorry."

"Don't," he immediately responded and held him closer to his chest. "You have nothing to be sorry for. Nothing at all," Ludwig leaned forward and kissed his head. "I should be the one who's sorry. I shouldn't have left you alone."

Feli shrugged and leaned into Ludwig. "Who was he?"

"My grandfather," Ludwig stiffened. "I didn't remember that he would be home today." He shook his head and pursed his lips together. "I'm sorry, Feliciano." His voice cracked as if he were going to cry.

Feliciano kissed him on the lips to reassure him. "Please don't worry about this. I'm okay, really."

Ludwig nodded and kissed him on the forehead. "I love you, Felciano."

The car stopped and Feli turned to look where they were.

The warm air, the thick scent of water and salt, seagulls squawking loudly. They were on the beach. Feliciano almost forgot what it looked like. The sun's rays glimmered on the water and danced with the waves. He almost cried at the sight of the wide spread of water. "I'm home." He choked out and smiled at Ludwig. "I'm really home."

Ludwig nodded and kissed him. "I thought it would be best," he sighed and tried to blink the emotion out of his eyes. Instead of speaking and risking the tears, he picked up Feli and jumped out of the car. "Are you sure you're okay?"

"I'm fine, Luddy, really." Feli smiled at him for reassurance. "Will you still visit me?"

"Everyday, meine liebe." He grunted. To be honest, he didn't want to let Feliciano go. He didn't want him to leave at all. He wanted to hold Feli in his arms, he wanted to kiss Feli, he wanted Feli. To have to release him back, to let him go, was killing him on the inside.

The two legs began to walk into the water and Feli almost squealed at the feeling of water rushing over his scales. He reached down and touched the water with one of his hands. He

giggled and flashed his mate a bright grin. "Ludwig, do you remember our promise? Can you go swimming with me sometime? Maybe even go under?"

Ludwig nodded and released him into the water. Feli swam around and rolled around in the shallow water. "Ludwig, I missed this."

Ludwig watched him and chuckled. "Feli, you're so cute."

The merman stopped and blinked at Ludwig. "Thank you, Luddy." He blushed and threw himself onto Ludwig. "I'm going to miss those compliments all the time. Can we sleep together sometime?"

The human's face immediately turned red and he coughed, trying to think of something to say. "I..I...You don't..." He stammered and coughed harder into a fist. "Feli, I-"

"I'm teasing, Luddy!" He smiled. "You're so funny sometimes." He blinked and kissed Ludwig on his cheek.

The two held each other in the water and sighed contently. Their heads touched and silence over fell them. Neither said anything and just simply enjoyed the other's presence. It went unsaid that they were delaying Feli's departure.

"Feliciano, I-" Ludwig began, but was interrupted by Gilbert honking the horn.

"Ludwig, Grandpa is calling my phone nonstop! We need to go!" He called out to the blonde.

"Guess both of our grandpas are waiting for us, huh?" Feli smiled sadly at him. "I'll see you tomorrow, I promise."

Ludwig leaned forward and kissed him on his lips for a full moment. "I promise."

Feli lingered for a few seconds before jumping into the water and swimming off. Ludwig closed him eyes tightly and wiped off the tears that came to his eyes. He shouldn't be crying, he would see him tomorrow. It really wouldn't be that long, he would wait forever if he had to. Twenty-four hours were nothing compared to that.

He turned back and started heading back to the car.

Feli swam back to where he knew they would be if they were still here. His family was talking about leaving way before all of this happened weeks ago. What if they left without him?

He swam faster. If they left without him, he wouldn't know what to do. Before it was just go back to live with Ludwig and Gilbert, but what about the man there? Feliciano really didn't want to live with somebody who tried to kill him. His tail began to feel sore just thinking about the missing scale. He was lucky that Ludwig didn't notice it. If he did, well, he was pretty sure that Ludwig would blame himself the rest of his life.

He slowed down when he saw the cave they'd been staying in. It was the moment of truth. He slowly entered the cave and hesitantly looked around. He couldn't tell if it had been used

lately or not.

"Grandpa," he called out. "Lovino?" He swam forward and looked around. It seemed nobody was home. He frowned and blinked tears back. "Hello?" When silence responded, he began to cry. "Antonio?" He tried.

Nothing. He swam to the very back of the cave where they would sometimes sleep. When he found nothing there, he tried to look other places. There were only so many places you could check in a cave and Feli was beginning to get desperate. Would they really, truly leave without him? Could it actually be that he was going to left alone?

He was about to lose it when something sounded from the front of the cave. With a gasp, he followed the sound and almost cried when he saw what made the sound. His grandfather was there. His twin brother was swimming behind him into the cave when he saw why they stopped and followed suit. The only merman that wasn't there was Lovino's brother, Antonio. And he was sure as hell wasn't going to leave Lovino behind.

"Felicano?" His grandfather finally dared to speak. "Is that really you?"

Feli shot forward and embraced him in a tight hug. "Grandpa!" He smiled into the familiarity of the scene and hugged him tighter. "Grandpa, I'm home!"

Strong, shaking, arms wrapped around him and his grandfather breathed heavily in relief and happiness. "You're home, Feliciano, you're home."

He was home. And he didn't want to leave.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

> Sorry for the wait, y'all!! This is more of a filler chapter than anything else, but still important to read. Sorry it's short, I whipped it up during my spare time.
>
> Hope you enjoy!

“What the HELL was that?!” Ludwig’s voice filled the air thunderously.

As soon as the two German brothers had gotten home, they began to question their grandfather. He had said nothing so fair, just stared at Ludwig with undying disappointment. They had managed to bring him up to his office where they were solemnly allowed in. Ludwig tried not to remember the blood he had to work with when he was helping Feliciano, but the memories were too strong. His rage was boiling over with them. Something so similar could’ve happened with him if they hadn’t gone home so soon.

“Well,” Ludwig repeated. “Are you going to say nothing?”

Silence was his response.

“West,” The albino softly put a hand on his shoulder. He gently moved his brother away from their grandfather to a corner where they could talk a bit more freely. “He’s not going to say anything, you know that. Let’s just stop.”

“Nien, I have to know what he was doing!” Ludwig shrugged his hand off and glared at his brother. “Don’t you want to know?”

“Of course I do,” Gilbert muttered just as coldly. “But I also know that he won’t say shit. He never does anyway. Why should this time be any different?”

Ludwig glared at the attacker once more before glancing back to Gilbert. His feet were restless and he jumped back and forth on them. He opened his mouth to say something, stopped, shut it and hissed through a sharp breath.

“If you boys are done,” the elder voice sounded off. “I’m going to take my leave to my room for the night.”

“We are anything but done!” Ludwig snapped and marched forward. “Why the hell did you just attack him?!”

Their grandfather simply watched Ludwig simmer without blinking an eye. Without saying anything, he crossed the room with his footsteps sounding like guns shooting to Ludwig. The

blonde was about to charge at him and demand once again for him to say something about his actions when he stopped.

Slowly he turned around and gave a cursory glance at the two brothers. “If you would like to know,” he gibed at them, “Then shut up and listen.”

After a moment’s pause, he turned back to the wall and pulled a book off a dusty shelf. “Back when your mother was alive, I was gone almost all the time like I am now. Neither of you boys know what I do when I leave, and for years I have kept it like that.” He flipped open the book and sighed with nostalgia. “You could call me a pirate, I guess. I would hunt for treasure, legendary articles worth millions,” he paused and glared at Ludwig. “And hunted merpeople.”

“You did what?” Gilbert cocked his head to the side. “As awesome as that sounds, I can’t believe that an old coot like yourself could manage to go up a flight of stairs. Let alone go fight with pirates!” He laughed a bit but stopped abruptly when he saw the glares he was receiving.

“It is true. Why do you think we are so rich?”

Neither of the brothers answered.

“I’m damn good at what I do. I killed hundreds of merpeople, until they figured out that they should be scared of humans. I bet yours was terrified when it first saw you,” he smirked at Ludwig. “But I haven’t seen them for years. The last I saw was when your parents were alive. They were beautiful creatures. They had twins in the water that were crying to them,” He smiled and gave a deep breath of pride. “I always dream of them. Their blood running down deck,” he chuckled.

"You monster," Ludwig muttered. It was quiet enough his grandfather couldn't hear exactly what he had said, but glared nontheless.

“But that stopped. Ten, fifteen, years pass without any sign. What was I suppose to do when I saw that blue thing swimming in my own house?”

“Leave it the hell alone,” Ludwig suggested mockingly. “He is-”

“You’re screwing with it aren’t you,” He cut in. “That fish and you are together, ain’t ya?”

Ludwig said nothing.

The two of them simply glared at one another for what seemed like a year. Neither of them moved in the year that passed. They seemed to age a year with their hatred instantly burning the air in the room. Gilbert was siding with his brother on this one. The man was family, but a murderer. And he had tried to kill his little brother’s light in the world. Nobody would get away with that, nobody in the world would dare to do such an act. Ludwig felt the severed connection between the brothers and their elder almost immediately throughout the time that passed and they were never going to be the same again. Two against one. It was a civil war internally during the twelve months and it was about to be externally.

The year that changed them happened in almost ten seconds.

Their grandfather scoffed at them. “You boys are crazy,” he shook his head. “Just like your parents were,” he left the room and slammed the door closed.

The next day, Ludwig had traveled the mile from their house to the beach. It was a very cold day and the water was no exception. Instead of the brilliant blue it usually was, it was a dull grey. No birds were out and all the other animals that usually were at the beach were hidden as well. The salt was only a faint scent on the air, mostly it was freezing cold and clusters of water drops.

Ludwig hated it.

He hadn’t brought anything to keep him warm, and his knees were knocking together as a consequence. The only good thing about it was that he was positive that nobody would be on their boats today, it was too freezing outside.

Trying to blink the damp air, the fog from his breath, and not be frozen altogether, his eyes scanned the ocean for his strange lover. For a few minutes, he simply stood there, but now he could barely stand still without something being frozen. Ludwig began to pace around to warm his frozen body. It wasn’t working very well, but it was better than nothing at all. Not only that, but he was trying to avoid the ocean water that managed to climb up the sand.

“This is insane.” He darkly muttered. “Feli,” he called out. “Feliciano, it’s cold! Are you coming?”

No answer.

He cursed and began to get the temptation of leaving. Really, the thought of being inside and warm had set his heart aflame and he wanted nothing more than to do that. He could get into his bed, pull out a book, and read. Maybe his dogs would get up with him and warm his feet further.

“Luddy, wait!”

A smile spread out on his face. Out on the distance, he could just barely see Feliciano. He waved at Ludwig before disappearing under the water. It was only a few seconds afterwards that he jumped out of the water only feet from where Ludwig was.

“Sorry,” he shivered, “It’s so cold I didn’t think you were going to show up.”

“I was very tempted not to. I was about to go home actually to warm up.” He said with a ghost of a frown. At Feliciano’s fallen face, he smirked. “But nothing could warm me up like seeing you.”

Feli smiled and blushed only a touch under the skin. He jumped the rest of the way, knocking them both to the ground with Feli on top of Ludwig. He kissed the blonde on the lips and hugged him tightly. “Luddy,” He cooed. “I love you!”

The blonde seemed to stutter for a second, blushed heavily, and quietly admitted his feelings for the attractive fish on his chest. The two laid there quietly and silently kissed each other in peace. Finally, it seemed as though that the world was content enough to let then have this moment of peace. The ocean's cold but calm waves created a soft spud in the distance that calmed them of any worries they ever had. The soft lips of the other made it feel like everything would forever be okay. Ludwig's strong muscles provided a hard, but comfortable pillow for Feliciano, along with simply surrounding him with both love and protection.

No, they didn't go further than kissing. Ludwig briefly wondered if they ever could consider such an act. Where would it go anyway? Besides, they didn't need sex to prove that they loved each other.

Once they broke apart, each had to take a quick breath of air. Feli rested his forehead on Ludwig's and smiled. His brown eyes blinked at the blue ones staring back at them. Whoever thought that brown eyes weren't romantic was crazy. Ludwig could easily describe them as the perfect shade of chocolate, the best tasting coffee in the world, the richest and softest earth ever dug up by man, the bark of the tallest tree in the world, the fur of the cuddliest teddy bear. The list could go on forever, but he didn't need to.

They were perfect.

Feli just wanted to have the chance to swim in the shade of Ludwig's eyes. He swore he had to die in order to have the privilege of doing so. Those eyes and the sandy hair framing the beautiful face, it was just one of the many, many things that made Feli love his human.

The two spent the entire afternoon like that. Kissing, hugging, it was all perfect. They eventually moved into the water for a bit, but Ludwig couldn't stand the cold water biting at his legs for a long time. Eventually he had enough and just walked along the rocks and listened to Feli blabber on about something. He couldn't really pay attention to what he was saying, the sound of his voice was too distracting.

Eventually the two had to say goodbye. It was getting very dark very fast. Especially with the way the clouds were dark already. Feli didn't want to hur Ludwig by having him stay, so he swam along the rocky line with him until they reached the shore. Their parting kiss lasted longer than it usually did when they were going to see each other the next day. A feeling of forboding set upon the two of them.

It went unsaid that they were timid to leave the other that night.

"Ich liebe dich, Feliciano. Forever," he added the last part with a smile that screamed that it was deeply in love.

"Ti amo, Ludwig." Feli sighed deeply. "I will see you tomorrow."

As Ludwig began to walk away, Feli noticed a familiar shape walk away. The feeling of horor began to grow uncomfortable as if something was about to strike his spine. He blinked quickly and turned to leave when he heard something. He gasped fearfully. The tears began to pick at his eyes, this wasn't okay. This was far from okay. He began to shake. He needed to go home now.

He really needed to go home now, he couldn't bare to be there any longer.

Chapter 16

When Ludwig returned to his house from his passionately short trip to see the love of his life, he found his grandfather there waiting for him. He had his arms crossed with a stern expression on his face. He looked like he had been standing there a while, but with him you could never fully tell. “Ludwig.” He greeted. His voice cracked with impatience. “Where were you?”

Ludwig considered not answering at all. He had enough of what hi grandfather had done and didn't want to continue with it. A nagging voice in his head muttered what would happen if he didn't answer though. When he made up his mind, the German walked by without a backwards glance, but stopped a few yards away. It was a very dangerous game to play if he didn’t say anything. If anything, that would only make things even worse. “I was visiting...someone very special to me.”

“That mermaid.” His grandfather stated, not asked.

“Merman.” Ludwig barked softly under his breath.

“Still a creature that shouldn’t mix with a human, Ludwig.” Ludwig heard steps come closer to him, but didn’t turn. “Humans don’t belong in the mer world.”

“Then what are you doing here?” He snapped and walked forward, ignoring the reflection of his grandfather on the glass door. Even the reflection was ugly enough to show the evil within.

Gilbert was lounging on the sofa when he walked in, feeding Gilbird some pieces of bread. “Hey, bro. How was the fish man?”

Ludwig found himself sitting next to him, sighing deeply. “Feliciano is doing well. Grandfather though is just-”

“A total shithead. I know, he got onto me about where my less awesome brother is and how it isn’t awesome that I don’t know.” Gilbert shrugged and looked at him. “But that’s grandpa for you.”

Ludwig clenched his fists. “It shouldn’t be. How could he just sit there thinking that I actually need some babysitter. I’m over twenty years old, I think I could handle a simple…” Ludwig trailed off, not knowing how to describe his lover.

“Well, yeah, but you’re also doing it with a fish. I think that gains some points, right?” Gilbert laughed a bit and threw a piece over to the bird. “But seriously, Luddy, I wouldn’t worry about it too much. I mean, imagine how Feli must feel.”

Ludwig stopped his train of thoughts and considered his stupid brother’s wise words. This was true. A man who killed merpeople was his lover’s grandfather. What did that say about his own family? What did the day about humans?

Ludwig focused on the carpet between his legs and tried to think clearly. Everything seemed to hurt his head. All the ideas he had, all the memories of his love, everything was just hurting him. The poison his grandfather set in was seeping through his vessels, killing cell after cell, slowly making it's way down to his heart. It stopped for nothing and the only thing that could possible hold it back any further were the memories of Feliciano kisses, the way his cheeks turned inwards when he smiled, the perfect shade of trees his eyes produced when reflected. That slowed the killing poison down enough to where Ludwig could focus on what he had to do next.

His grandfather was tricky and would not accept anything less than perfection from his grandchildren. Of course, his grandchildren lived by their own rule of perfection which only made it worse for the ever growing temper. He had repeatedly cursed the old man under his breath, but Ludwig knew that it wasn't enough to let the steam out that way.

It was time to actually take action.

Ludwig began to consider a plan that could help them finally get rid of their family member. If he had drove him to the police station and reported him for whatever he had done, he would be arrested. He would have to figure something out though. Without thinking, he already knew what he would report his grandfather against: child neglectance. He neglected them for years on end, and when he did come back, it was for a very short visit.

Could people even be arrested for neglect? He knew that if the kid died then, yes, but otherwise?

He sighed. “Gilbert,” He spoke softly. “I think our grandfather and I should have a talk. Will you be here when I get back?”

“Yeah, I guess. Why?”

“Because it could get rocky. I just wanted to let you know.”

Gilbert quirked an eyebrow at him. “Whatever. You okay, bro? Seem kinda weird. Weirder than usual I mean.”

Ludwig nodded and stood. “I’ll be fine.”

Ludwig convinced his grandfather that they needed to talk, which he agreed to, but Ludwig demanded that they do it in the car while driving to give him some ease of mind. That, and for none of them to back out. His grandfather nodded to these agreements and went with him. They were on the highway so far and silence was overwhelming them both.

Rain began to pour down. Usually it wasn’t this bad, but it was one of those showers that left mist slowly rising from the ground from how hard and heavy it was pouring. The rain seemed to fit for how Ludwig was feeling. He felt like nothing was certain anymore, how everything was being affected by the rain and how the rocks shifted everything. The currents, where the water landed, how they blocked the water from achieving their goal of helping the plants

everywhere. The scent in the air was sweet of fresh rain, giving some more ease to Ludwig, but the fog in the windows was getting very annoying.

Ludwig shut his eyes for a second, just a second, before opening them to obey the rules of the road: a how to guide written by Ludwig the Stern, as his brother would advertise. Only nineteen-ninety nine, plus shipping and handling. Buy yours before time runs out.

“Did you know that they used to call me Germania?” His grandfather’s tone cut through his thoughts. “They called me that when I was sailing.”

Ludwig’s knuckles turned white on the wheel. “That’s what I wanted to talk about.” He lied. “I think I might be considering what you do.”

“Oh? And killing your boyfriend?” His grandfather sneered. “I cannot believe that a related member of my family is gay. And even worse, two.”

“There is nothing wrong with being who you love.” Ludwig growled from clenched teeth. “And how dare you think otherwise when you simply leave us alone and don’t even get to know us?” He growled and shook his head. His hands were beginning to shake. “And no, that isn’t what I meant. I could never hurt Feliciano.”

“Oh?” Germania cocked an eyebrow. “Then what did you mean?”

“I meant that I would pick up what you were doing and leave. Only I won’t be coming back. Ever. I’m leaving and I am not coming back.”

Germania’s face twisted into a fierce glare. “You think that’s all I do? Is leave?”

“Yes! That is exactly what I think you do!” Ludwig yelled. “You don’t even care for us, you leave us money and a prepaid house then call it good.”

“I love you boys!”

“Like hell you do.”

“Excuse me,” Germania grabbed the wheel and pulled sharply to the side.

Panic quickly filled his veins and Ludwig slammed on the breaks before they could do anything serious and pushed the arm to the side and off the wheel. The car was in the other lane, but nobody else would dare drive in this weather. They were safe, he had to repeat to himself. They were safe and nothing would happen to him.

His heart was beating wildly and he couldn't breathe, but his grandpa continued on in their pointless conversation. He couldn’t hear whatever pathetic excuses his grandfather was spewing out due to how furious his heart’s beat was in his ears, but eventually it faded away.

“...trying to be something you aren’t. You need to grow some balls and think about reality!”

“I need to grow balls?” Ludwig scoffed. “Are you serious? No. No I have them, thank you. You, on the other hand need to.”

“Ludwig, how dare you? How can I talk to you without you being so childish?”

“How can I talk to you with you hounding down on everything me and Gilbert are doing when you aren’t even here to know about it!”

The two continued to bicker on, not realizing that another truck was coming down the road. The rain was so heavy that the windshield wipers weren’t clearing any water away. By the time it swept off the water, more was back. The driver grunted and continued to drive, but by the time that he recognized that shape was another car, it was too late to brake.

“You’re just like your mother, Ludwig. A useless-”

The words were cut off. It all happened in slow motion to Ludwig, who was glaring at his family member. The truck’s griddle was in view before the horn blared in their ears. It crashed into their puny car, shattering the windows and denting the metal effortlessly. The car lifted up and began to flip-still in slow motion. His grandfather had a pained expression on his face, but Ludwig couldn’t focus on that. The glass in the windshield shattered beyond repair, sending shards everywhere.

The car began to flip on it’s own, turning one, two, three, four, times before it landed on it’s side, sending Ludwig’s head sharply to the side and hitting the ground and the side of the door.

This happened in less than three seconds.

Red slowly drifted into the wet ground, sending a soft shade of pink into the streets. The water from the rain carried it out further. Ludwig’s eyes were shut tightly. He couldn’t feel himself, he couldn’t feel anything but the cold feeling everywhere in his body. His lungs hurt too much to breathe, he couldn’t focus on anything.

Except the small voice of his love in his head. “Luddy!” It sang to him. Yes, this was it. But it was nice. Ludwig was happy enough. He would go swimming with Feliciano. Maybe he could finally meet his family. That would be nice. Anybody to raise Feliciano like that had to be loving and caring.

Ludwig smiled and went still.

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

> Hey y'all, somebody brought it to my attention that it gets a bit graphic at the end? So just a heads up there is blood and death at the end of this chapter.

Feliciano Vargas was known for being scared about small things. He was known for the small incidents of being too scared of going to jump with the dolphins and staying behind at home. He was known for going up to shore and collecting shells when everybody else was collecting memories of their friends and families that surrounded them. But despite all the rumors that were going around about him, the stories that brought shame to his name, Feli had never been this scared.

Ludwig hadn't shown up for days now. He promised that he would come down everyday to see him, but for the past week nothing. No word, no dogs barking next to their very attractive owner, no amusing and reckless brother, nothing. And it scared Feliciano to the core. He didn't know if he was hurt, if he was in trouble with his grandfather, no news to soothe Feliciano's anxious thoughts.

And at the same time of him being absolutely frightened, it hurt him. His heart felt like it was going to drown with all the tears that he had been crying. The beating was either too fast or too slow, his heart couldn't make up it's mind. It hurt him to think that Ludwig would disappear like this, maybe he found somebody better. Maybe he found somebody that was human and could actually do things with him.

Feli's family was worried too, but they were also angry. Lovino told him repeatedly that he should've known this was going to happen, that he couldn't expect anything else from his stupid human friend. Grandpa Roma was more understanding and sympathetic, but all the same was a bit cross with Feli for getting so far into love that it hurt him like this. Antonio offered to take him to find more shells, and Feli declined politely. He knew that Antonio was only try to cheer him up, which he gladly appreciated.

So there he sat on the rocks, soaking up the sun. The waves carefully rolled up to resoak his shining blue scales and fins. He had been sitting on the rocks, waiting for you know who, every day the past week for hours. Today was a very nice day and he could feel the sun drying his hair. Maybe he would actually see what it felt like to have dry hair for once. He never stayed too long to find out before he met Ludwig, but he was more than willing ready to find out today if that meant seeing the cute blonde that affected his life.

He opened his eyes briefly to watch some seagulls playing over him. The annoying flying rats squawked at him a few times, but he never really payed them much mind. He learned to

tune out a lot of things in his life that he didn't want to hear. Especially when it came to the words of others that he only knew would hurt him and leave emotional scars.

Which is probably why he didn't hear the approaching footsteps, coming at a fast pace.

Feli lazily flicked his tail through the water. It was a nice day and he couldn't help but daydream about what he and Luddy would do if he were there. Maybe he would take him to see the baby dolphins that would be coming here later in the year. They were pretty small and the moms chased you if you weren't too careful, but that only made it a bit more fun.

Just as he was thinking about their last kiss, a human hand grabbed his shoulder. His eyes snapped open and adrenaline rushed through his system like fire finding a dry field. He turned around quickly and struggled in the grip, screaming in a very feminine way that he would be embarrassed about later on. But in the meantime, he couldn't focus on anything but the human with white hair and a worried expression on his face. Wait-

"Ve, G-Gilbert?" He squeaked out of his petrified mouth.

"Ja, Feli. Jeez, I've been calling your name for, like, a few minutes. I know that you're not as awesome as me, but shouldn't your fishy hearing at least pick that up?"

Feli sighed heavily and looked at Gilbert with a suddenly anxious face. "Gilbert, where's Ludwig, is he okay, what happened? I haven't seen him in a few days and I'm really worried, did something happen?" He rushed the words, desperately trying to get any information at all out of Gil. Anything, anything was better than the nothingness he was experiencing. He always did hate being kept in the dark about anything, especially when it involved the love of his life.

Gilbert reached up with his hands and grabbed Feli's frantic arms, which were waving everywhere. The albino German said nothing and just watched Feli's eyes, which were now filled with tears of all the emotions he had experienced in the past week. The ever present smile of Gilbert was no longer present, in it's place was a small frown that made the merman's heart clench further. Something really did happen. Even if Ludwig had twisted his walking appendage again, whatever that was called (uncle?), his brother would find some way of making a joke out of it.

With a deep sigh, Gilbert moved his lips, saying something that Feliciano couldn't comprehend. It was like the entire world went silent when the words passed through his mouth. He couldn't be right, he saw Ludwig the other day. What Gilbert was saying didn't make any sense.

"W-what?"

"He's in the hospital right now, though, don't worry. They said he's going to be okay. Grandpa died, thank god, nobody liked him,, but Ludwig hit his head really hard." He paused to analyze the fish in front of him. "I'm sorry I wasn't down here sooner, they needed me to fill out some forms for my little awesome-ish bro."

"When can he come back?" Feli sobbed. "I miss him."

"Well, Feli, that's the thing." Gilbert let go of one of Feli's arms and rubbed the back of his head. He paused in everything he was doing and cursed under his breath. "How am I going to say this to you?" He pouted and turned back to Feliciano.

"Ludwig lost his memory. He still has bits and pieces of things, but the docs think that he lost the last three or four years." He let that sink in for Feli for a moment before continuing on. The look on his face was already like he was telling him Ludwig did die. Maybe it would've been better if he told him that. "He won't come to the beach anymore. He's scared of the water again. He doesn't remember you, or anything that happened in the last couple of years..."

Silence.

Feliciano couldn't move. He couldn't move from his paralysing status of numb pain he felt in his heart.

Then the numbness faded, bit by bit. And it began to kill him.

Feliciano couldn't find the air surrounding him anymore. It was impossible to breathe anymore. He couldn't see clearly with the tears in his eyes now streaming down his face. He was dimly aware of Gilbert apologizing with agony written on his face, a few tears escaping his own "awesome" eyes. But Feliciano couldn't. He really just couldn't do anything. Eventually he was aware of pain filled screams filling the air and only realized that they belonged to him when the pain from screaming so much filled his throat.

Gilbert stayed and comforted him for a while, but had to go back to the human world eventually. Feliciano simply stayed on the beach and cried.

It was like an out of body experience. He was a fish zombie, if that was actually a thing. He briefly wondered if it was, but gave up. What was the point? What was the point of anything anymore, really?

He was aware that months flew by, he was aware that he wasn't eating. He was aware that he went up everyday for almost the entire day waiting for Ludwig.

He never came.

He wasn't aware, however, that his family was far from being angry with the human anymore. After they had literally dragged Feliciano back into the sea, they were now scared. They were now struck with great worry about what would happen to Feli if he remained in his depressed state for too long. They tried to talk to him, tried to engage him in things, but their words were heard like they were muffled. As if somebody was trying to speak to him in water if he were...human. That word still stung him, months after never saying goodbye to his old Luddy.

He did however, see Gilbert one time after everything. He gave him something very important to him and made Gilbert swear that once Ludwig remembers that he would give it to him. Gilbert swore and also promised to deliver a "sappy chick flick message" to Ludwig. It was enough to put Feli back into a mild state of awareness, but it didn't last for long.

Word travels around the ocean like currents. The phrases of gossip swished around the water, changing direction almost instantly if it so choose to do so. It reached all living things if they were anywhere near the place of origin and would help spread it by swishing their tails, or simply breathing it. And eventually, word of a new, safe, area arose and reached the Vargas pod.

"Feli?" Roma called out to his grandson, who was currently sitting on the bottom of their cave on the sand.

Feli barely turned his head towards him, the only indicator of being aware that he spoke.

Roma took a deep breath. This would sting his grandson, but he had to hear this. He really needed to just hear this.

"Feli, I have endured the death of your mother and father. I will not stand to see an empty shell of a once full of life boy simply breathe." Feli didn't move. "We are leaving to go to another safer place."

Feli's head lifted up.

"We're going to be safe from the humans, Feli, no living creature for miles around us." Roma informed him as he watched panic fill his youngest family member's eyes.

"N..no." Feli choked out. This can't be right, it couldn't' happen. Despite it being the first time he's said anything in a long time, he couldn't give up in this. Ludwig might return and remember! What if he wasn't here?!

"Feli," Roma sighed. "It'll be okay. It's a new place, new shells you can collect-"

"NO!" Feli screamed.

"Feliciano!" Roma roared back. "This is not up for discussion. We are leaving."

"Then leave without me."

"Feliciano!"

"I can't leave him!" Feli pushed himself up from the ground and got in his grandfather's face. "I can't just give up on him like you did mom!"

A flicker of quick fear and regret filled him and he backed up. "Grandpa, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to say that."

Roma simply took a deep breath and looked at Feli with a stern look. "Feliciano, listen to me, we have been through this for many moons." He watched Feli with sad eyes in his expression. "He's not coming back."

The young merman shook his head and sobbed. "I'll stay. I stay until Ludwig remembers me and-"

"And let yourself be killed?" Roma shook his very old head with distaste at what Feli was saying. "No. I forbid it. You will come with us. It's not up for discussion." He turned and began to swim away. "We leave tomorrow."

"Grandpa, please!" Feli sobbed and chased after him. "I can't leave him. He might remember. I love him, I need to stay. Please, Grandpa," he sobbed. "Please."

"Feliciano." Roma sighed. "Listen closely. Even though Ludwig is...gone." He tried not to notice Feliciano flinch at his name. "The memories of you two remain with you. If you look back on those and make new ones, ones with your family, he will remember one day. You have to be happy again. Wouldn't he want that?"

Feli solemnly nodded, lip still trembling.

"The memories are still there, Feliciano. Maybe not with his head, but with his heart. His love is pure, just like you. He will remember in time. But we are out of time, my little one." Feli looked up at his grandfather. "We must go."

"But wouldn't it be better if I stayed? It'll be easier to find me!"

"Feliciano, if you stay you won't care for yourself. You'll waste away. If he ever does remember, don't you think he'd want you to be okay?"

Feli didn't say anything, he just simply nodded again. His heart felt like it was betraying Ludwig.

"We leave in the morning."

Feli felt a tear escape from his eyes as he simply floated there. "My Luddy." He sobbed again.

Feliciano said goodbye to everything he loved that night. He went up to the shore to wait for his family there, they promised to pack his things, as he said goodbye to his favorite rock, the place where he would meet Ludwig, everything. The waves even seemed to sad to move much that night. It was so still, Feli swore that it was the calm before the storm. But no storm was coming, he could usually sense the weather instinctively for protection.

The waves might've been calm, but Feli was far from being calm. He didn't think his heart could truly handle this. It felt so wrong, it felt like he was going to do something insidious or something. What would Ludwig have him do? He couldn't leave, but he had no other choice without harming himself. He had to be okay if Ludwig did remember one day.

"Feliciano?" Roma's voice carried through the waves all too soon. He wasn't done saying goodbye. "We have to go. Are you ready?"

"Yes." He called back and swam out.

No. He would never be ready to leave his Ludwig. It was the one thing he loved that he wasn't able to say goodbye to.

A few weeks had passed, and the group of four mermen were still swimming to the new home they would be living at. It had apparently taken more than they were expecting, but they were still able to hunt properly and made good time.

Feliciano was still hurt, it showed on his face, but it seemed like he was accepting that Ludwig would have to be okay if he left and he had to make sure that he himself would be okay too. Feli knew that he would go back and made it very clear that he would go back to visit Ludwig again soon. Even if he didn't remember he wanted to go back.

The family had passed a few memorable sights. So far, jumping with Dolphins was the funnest, but Feli was still shy enough only to do a jump or two with them. A baby dolphin had taken a liking to Feliciano though and had begun to follow him around before the mother caught sight of it and chased it back to their own pod.

Feli named the dolphin Ludwig.

Currently, no pun intended, they were swimming in mostly clear water. It was a nice day in and out of the water, so no problem there. The kelp was a nice shade of green and the fish were reflecting the sun off of their scales with almost an intended purpose. The family could feel it in their gills that they were close, the water was getting bluer and more purified as they went along. No humans had touched this area, which was a blessing for the group. Well, all but one.

Feliciano was minding himself. He didn't intend on what happened next to happen, far from it.

Regardless, it happened.

They were swimming along in the current, enjoying the sun on their backs. If somebody were to peer into the water above them, the water was so clear they would be able to see the four of them swimming with the water reflecting on their backs. They would be able to see the colors of their scales and the designs of each merman. It would be the most beautiful sight anybody would ever see, a sight one would never forget and think of on their deathbed.

Feli was by far the prettiest one in the group. But his heart was already gone, but don't worry ladies (and/or gents), he might even flirt with you once he was with…

He tore his gaze away from his family to off in the distance. It was still too hard to think of his name. As he was looking away, he noticed something far off in the distance glimmering back at him. With a curious mind set, he turned for it. It was wedged in the sand pretty good so he had to dig for it a bit, but he was able to pull it out:

A fishhook.

Huh. Maybe some humans had been here before.

Before he was able to tell the news of his newest discovery to his pod, a familiar roar reached his gills and made everything still. He knew that roar, he knew that sound. It was a very

dangerous sound to hear out in the wild. It might've been cute in the zoo or wherever, but this was not the zoo. These things were dangerous and it had it in their name what they were.

Killer whale.

Feliciano took off before it had the chance to even get closer to him than it already was. Feli turned his head to see the frightening sight behind him: it was following him. He was going to be the next meal of this whale unless he was able to outswim it. He was the fastest he ever met, and he intended to be able to make it out alive.

The whale roared again, Feli slipping behind some rocks with a sharp turn. The whale, sadly, was able to make the same turn and even found a shortcut to Feliciano through the rocks. The teeth were mere inches away from Feliciano when the whale tried to take a bite, but he was able to jump back just in time. Feliciano swam faster around the whale in circles to try and confuse it, but when he tried to swim down on one of the turns, teeth pierced his tail. Immediately pain filled his system, but he had to ignore it.

He had to be okay for Ludwig. Feli hit the whale repeatedly, managing to get the whale to loosen his grip just a little.

Feli took the chance and was off like a rocket, a red trail following after him. The whale roared louder and Feli fought back tears. If he made it to the surface he might be able to crawl on top of some rocks for a while to wait out the whale.

He pushed harder than he had previously, imagining Ludwig to be up there, waiting for him. He had to make it to his love, he had to make it, he had to make it. Just a bit closer, he reached out with his arm to touch the rocks and glide atop.

The killer whale howled it's hunting roar. It filled his entire being and he was pretty sure that a few ribs were shaken at the sound vibrations alone. He was so close to the rocks, only a few more feet and he would've made it. He cursed himself for being so slow. He wanted to be able to see the beautiful face of him again. Feliciano's entire being shook with both pain and shock. His last image was of him.

"LUDWIG!" He screamed at he barely touched the rocks with his fingertips. The teeth that were dug into his body tugged him back into the water. So close, he was so close.

More red filled the water.

Feli sighed as he felt his body slowly give out. His last thoughts wee of Ludwig's smile and his deep voice. The way the sun reflected off of his perfect body when it was wet, when it was with him. Feli smiled to himself as he drafted closer to the darkness. It was a fantastic reunion in his mind.

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

This is it, guys! The last chapter. Fear not, there will be an epilogue! :D

Ludwig was troubled. Something had been bugging him all day and would not leave his poor brain alone. It was nagging at him, it was something important. Lately things have been weird too. Gilbert would look at him with this face that just spelled out the definition of pity and guilt. Was there remorse there too?

Every since he came home from the car accident that killed their grandfather, Ludwig readjusted to his life fairly well. After all, he had been doing the same thing everyday for the past however many years. Why should some missing time matter anyway? The most he might've been upset over was the World Cup results. He and his brother would always watch the games together. He celebrated with a beer when he googled who won the game over the last year, Germany had apparently destroyed everybody.

Months passed.

Nothing really changed for him. He reread his favorite books, talked small talk when needed during errands, worked out. Everything was back to normal for him. He didn't really grieve for his grandfather anyway. He was never home anyway, he rarely saw him since the last...what year was it?

Ludwig sighed and shook his head. Some things were still cloudy and the nagging feeling was becoming ever so annoying. It was as if it were right below the surface of his mind, just swimming in his thoughts to annoy him personally. He really should've brought his dogs with him on the walk he was on. He could use the company and the day was nice, a clear day, birds were out singing in the trees. He could faintly smell the ocean and suppressed a shiver and premature fear that bubbled up in his chest. The humidity today, thankfully, was low.

He could even let his dogs off their leashes for a while, they would really like that. So long as they didn't go jump into the pond this time. The last time the larger one had caught a fish with his teeth and killed the poor thing. He had to take it away and throw it in the trash, the dumb dog tried to eat that. Wait a second.

Ludwig froze. The memory of the splashing dog brought something forward in his mind. Something that had been bugging him for the entire day.

Shiesse. Oh, dammit.

He was suppose to take the dogs to the vet today!

How could he forget that? He would have to pay extra now for missing the appointment.

He sighed on turned back to head home. It was a long enough walk now and he wanted to make sure that the stupid albino brother of his hadn't burnt the house down.

One thing he didn't expect when he opened the door was the fact that Gilbert was shirtless on the couch. Well, it didn't totally take him by surprise. Gilbert would sometimes go shirtless on a very hot day, (who wouldn't?) but this was far from a hot day. And when the white haired man heard him enter, he stood.

He was wearing a swimsuit.

"Gilbert, no."

"Ludwig," Gilbert sighed. "Come on, we should go down to the beach. You've been over the fear for like the past year!"

"I don't remember that and refuse to believe that I would willing go down to the beach everyday. Why do we even live so close to the ocean?" Another thing that Gilbert had tried to do for the past few months was get him to go down to the beach. "I hate water, in case you forgot."

"No, you forgot. Ludwig, please. I won't say awesome for an entire day. A week!" Gilbert exclaimed. "A month!"

Ludwig turned to his brother with a shocked expression, yet underlining it was an annoyed frown. "Why are you so obsessed with getting me down there?"

Gilbert hesitated then sighed. A look of pain and disappointment crossed his face. And as soon as it was there, it was gone and a look of fresh anger came in it's place. "Awesome. You know what? Forget it."

Ludwig was left in the room by himself as Gilbert stomped away, even Gilbird was chirping in surprise.

Two: thirty-two in the morning.

It was what lit up his room. Those numbers who glared their overpowering meaning, taunting him with the joke of not being able to sleep. Lately he hadn't been able to sleep at all. Whenever he did, he would find himself at a beach, then a boat would appear. A killer storm, consuming the bodies of both his parents. And something more. A flash of something. Something like scales?

He would always wake up shaking, alone, confused, and scared. So scared, sweat dripping down, heart pumping wildly from fear. That word. Scare, fear, terrified, the feeling of unpleasantness that consumed him. He hated the word and he despised the feeling. He was tormented by the way that the word could influence so much of him. He hated this.

He hated being alone like this. He swore he was over the nightmares long ago. No more waking up scared, no more shivers in the night, no more.

He sat up and brushed back the soaked hair from falling forward onto his face. He couldn't help the tears that ran down his face at the same time. The sniffle that came from his nose didn't sound like him. It sounded like the child who owned the nightmare. That seven year old version of himself that was tormented from the nightmares. Gilbert's footsteps should be coming down the hall to help him any second now. He would bring comfort and the needed company that only a loved one could provide.

No footsteps came. No human comfort. No loved one.

That nightmare. That fresh nightmare that just played before his eyes haunted him yet.

What started out as the normal thing, the waves, the bubbles surrounding him and his family, the muffled sounds, then, suddenly. The beach. Sand shined from the sun, reflecting it with both light and warmth. The warmth fought the fear away and calmed him down enough to see clearly. His dogs were running around and barking happily. He was sitting on the sand. But it wasn't his perspective. It was from far away, from the waves themselves. He could see him sitting there, almost as if waiting for something.

Then, suddenly, he was closer. The perspective so close he could see his face and how he was wrestling with one of his dogs. How the blonde human on the beach was letting the dog think it was winning and was smiling softly. Something happened, all sounds stopped for a second, like a voice cut through them all. But Ludwig didn't hear a voice. The version of him must have because he looked up. He never looked so happy. He himself felt that happiness that spread out through him like wings. Like when you take a sip of cold water and you feel it race down your chest.

Pure joy.

He wasn't sure what to call this feeling. He hadn't ever felt like this before. Ludwig would remember it if he did. This was too amazing not to forget, with or without amnesia plaguing him.

A laugh filled his mind. It was so familiar, but yet, it wasn't. It was like it was a distant memory that he forgot. It was entirely possible, but it was far from being able to make him go to the beach everyday. And why would somebody be out in the water that far out?

But just like the waves crashing over him, everything was gone and replaced Instead of the bubbles, there was glass flying everywhere. He was rolling in the car again, not being held by the seat belt in the driver's seat like he was. Nobody could've survived otherwise, this flopping around proved that. He flew out of the car, from an open area or something and was able to see the car stop upside down. He was able to see a dead arm hang out from the window; his grandfather's.

Then the pain from the car accident that never happened hit him. It hurt so badly, who the hell created this false pain because it was nothing like he felt before. It paralyzed him and he

couldn’t breathe for a second. Then a minute. He looked over back to the car again and scrunched his eyes in pain.

But when he opened them, the arm changed. It had been changed to a tanner arm, one with a blue streak or something down it because something was sticking out. He couldn’t place what it was, but when he saw it, he became so scared. Everything began to shake in his vision and he didn’t know what to do. He was unable to move. All he could do was turn over onto his back and gag. It hurt, it hurt, it hurt, it hurt, it hurt, it hurt, this pain, IT HURT.

When he opened his eyes, everything was still shaking and he saw brown eyes that reflected his fear.

That’s when he woke up and shouted from the fear. He took hyperventilating pants and began shaking all over.

No footsteps. No concern. No comfort.

This had been an hour ago and he still wasn’t better. Even after he threw up.

Whatever happened to him in the last few years must’ve been bad because he was now living in Hell.

Weeks went by without improvement. He was now dealing with the pain of seeing the dreams during the day when something sparked them. He avoided the pool at all costs, refused to go anywhere near the ocean, even avoided the dogs at times. If he saw something that triggered them, he would have flashes of something.

Ludwig didn’t even know what to call it. It would be a flash of scales, a flash of the brown eyes again, a flash of laughter. He could piece together a body at times, but never a face. He could only see the brown hair that framed it if he was really lucky. Otherwise it would look like a male version of a mermaid.

And he swore he was going crazy.

And what was worse, he couldn’t tell anybody what he was going through otherwise they would think he was crazy too. After all, nightmares were one thing. But having them about a male mermaid and seeing them in the daytime were a complete other thing. Ludwig was pretty sure that Gilbert would be able to hear whatever screams he casted while he was asleep, or him panting when he woke up from the nightmare. But he never said anything.

Actually, Gilbert was pretty nonchalant these days. He didn’t really talk to Ludwig much anymore. He would just watch in concern if he jumped back from water or something of the sort. It was driving him crazy, the fact that his big brother was letting his little brother suffer in this hell all by himself.

All by himself.

Ludwig never felt so alone.

Even more so when he felt that pure feeling when the boy was in his dreams. He was beginning to feel truly alone in this world. Like nothing would ever be there for him. The only company he had were a pair of brown eyes in his dreams.

Who was that boy?

Enough was enough.

The dreams were getting more fierce, more aggressive, sentences were pouring out of the boy's mouth now. He couldn't hear them anymore. Just the chime. The chime of the beautiful man that didn't exist outside of his dreams. Unknown to Ludwig, he did exist outside of his dreams at one point, but he didn't any more. He now only existed in Ludwig's dreams and the memories shared by the loved ones of Feliciano.

But if the dreams kept showing him the beach, maybe that was the answer. He would go to the beach. Maybe then all this madness would stop. Maybe then he could remember something about the boy...his name...his face, anything. Anything would be a blessing to this never ending hell that he was suffering in.

So one day, when Gilbert was out of the house, Ludwig took his chance and left. He didn't want his annoying older brother breathing down his neck when he did this. He wanted to this alone and he wanted to do this now. That's why he ran down to the beach. It was a simply jog really and he didn't waste anytime flinching when he saw the water. He had a mission to accomplish.

And that mission impacted him already. When he saw the water, memories began to hesitantly spill in. He would get a glance at things every now and then, but when he saw the water it was almost as if he was dreaming. That feeling of hope finally surfaced to him in reality and for that he was grateful. This was really weird for him. He wasn't one for emotions, but right then he wanted nothing more than to get more of that wonderful feeling. He wanted nothing more than to share it with somebody.

Maybe that's what the feeling was, maybe that was love.

He did see glimpses of a kiss or two, after all.

More than anything though, he wanted this mystery to be solved. He wanted to know, no. He NEEDED to know. This was killing him and he needed to know who he was, who this wonderful, mysterious boy was. He was desperate to get rid of the nightmares, desperate to get to know this man again. Maybe if this was where he was whenever they met, this is where he was now.

Ludwig walked down the sand, closer and closer to the shore. He watched as the clear blue water washed up against the sand and shells and swirled them around in the water. He watched them in envy as they didn't ever have to stop and think about what these horrible, wonderful, feelings were or how the affected him or what happened in the last years. All they had to worry about was the water that surrounded them and how the currents swirled them around.

All at once, it was quiet. That clear water was beautiful. That clear, innocent, murderous water had killed his family. But it also was giving him reason to be here. It was giving him reason to go through and search for whatever it was that was haunting his dreams. And yet, they were now dreams. No longer nightmares.

“Ludwig! Luddy!”

Ludwig shot up at the nickname. He searched the water, looking for the owner of the voice. But nothing was there. No hand shooting up through the water, no brown hair. No brown eyes.

Instead, white hair behind him. Gilbert’s hand rested on his shoulder. “Luddy, can’t you hear?”

Ludwig said nothing. He felt the hand, a different hand, on his chest. On his face, on his hair, on his back as they kissed, he felt the angel like lips on his. Through his fingers he felt the soft scales, the warm unwashed hair, the pure skin that coated a pure boy.

He felt him. He felt so much more than it’s possible to describe. He felt the boy there, he felt love.

“We used to meet somebody here.” Ludwig commented, hinting at what they both knew was the merman.

“Yeah.” Gilbert turned to his brother and sighed. “ I think they felt though. I can’t find him anymore.” Ludwig looked crushed by that, even closing his eyes tightly, like he would when he was about to cry.

How could he be gone without him even knowing his name? It didn’t seem fair to Ludwig. It wasn’t fair. He had to be here, whatever his name was, he had to be here. He HAD to be. Ludwig didn’t know what he would do if he wasn’t. He also needed the name, if he had the name it would be a lot easier to find him. He could rent a boat or something, go scuba diving and hold up a sign that read who he was looking for a show it to whatever lived down there. Anything for the boy.

“Gilbert.” Ludwig breathed out. “What was his name?”

Gilbert didn’t know what to say. While he was proud of his brother finally getting over himself, he was scared that he wasn’t allowed to say it. It was far from his place. But who else would? They others hadn’t been there for months. He went down to the beach everyday to try and find the others who were in the water. But he didn’t ever find anything. He assumed they left.

How would his baby brother react?

“Wh...who?”

“Don’t give me that, Gilbert!” Ludwig turned towards him with a desperate look. “I lost it all, I’ve only just begun to see it. I see his eyes, his hair. I can’t see his face, goddammit, I want

to know!" He had to swallow the lump that's been growing in his throat. "I need it."

"Ludwig." His brother sighed. "I-" He closed his eyes and swallowed hard. "I can't tell you."

A pause.

"What?"

"I won't tell you. It's for you to figure out." Gilbert looked at the look of desperate and fresh pain on his face. "When you do, I have something for you though."

"I don't want any of your shit!" Ludwig growled and shoved him. "I just want to know his name!"

"Don't push me," Gilbert said gently, but firm. "Chill out, bro!"

"Don't call me that!" Ludwig shoved him harder. "Don't call me bro, I am not your brother!"

Gilbert's face twisted into one of pure fury and he swung his arm back. If Ludwig was going for violence then he would be too.

Ludwig landed in the water on his butt from the force of Gilbert's punch. He was about to retaliate when Gilbert threw himself onto Ludwig. The two struggled in the water for a few minutes, wrestling and pinning each other down on top of the other. The taste of water filled Ludwig's mouth, filling his head with more and more small glimpses into his unexplored past.

He brought the boy to live with him in their pool. He looked hurt with his tail being cut all over. Did something happen to him? He and the boy sitting on this beach. The boy was laughing that wonderful laugh of his that brightened up everything, his face unseen still.

Gilbert shoved his head under the water.

Ludwig being dragged down in the water by an unseen force. Another brown haired boy, blurred by the water, holding him there.

Gilbert punched his jaw.

His grandfather punching him as they wrestled in the pool.

Ludwig pushing Gilbert's chest off of him.
Ludwig carefully bringing a chest closer to him in a hug.

Gilbert's snarl in his ear as he pushed Ludwig down. His face twisted in anger and fresh blood dripping off a cut.

A strikingly beautiful face of a young merman. Soft brown hair framed him, with brown eyes to match perfectly. Those brown eyes that brought him so much joy and fear, finally able to bring him nothing more than pure joy. The rest of his face shown now, a button nose that seemed snug in the face surrounding him and a mouth that never seemed to be able to stop

smiling. The teeth were straight despite the man never knowing what a dentist is. His smile was one of a angel, maybe even a demon with how beautiful it was.

A name.

The two kept going at it until Ludwig scrambled away and stumbled in the water. He held his stomach tightly and began hacking, as if he were going to hack up something. In which, he did, vomit filling the ocean water that laid before him.

His name.

“Ludwig? Ludwig, are you alright?” He heard some splashing behind him, probably Gilbert making sure he was okay.

“Gil, Gilbert,” he threw a hand up to his mouth. “Oh my god.”

“Ludwig?”

Ludwig began to throw up more, through the gaps in his fingers and cough violently. Gilbert was by his side in a second, support him to make sure he didn’t fall into the sick infested water.

“Ludwig, are you okay?”

“Gilbert,” Ludwig couldn’t bring himself to look up at his brother, or anything of the sort. He could only focus on the water now.

The water, he once thought destroyed his life, but created him a new one.

“Gil,” He sobbed. Tears streamed down his face now. “Gilbert.”

“What is it, Ludwig? I’m here, it’s okay, I’m here.” A hand rubbed up and down his back for comfort. Finally, some comfort.

“Feliciano.” Ludwig cried into his hand, leaning on his brother. “Feliciano! His name was Feliciano!” He turned towards his brother, now, looking at his face. “We called him Feli sometimes!”

Gilbert nodded and hugged him tightly. “Ja, we did.”

“Where’s Feliciano? Where is my Feli?” He sobbed and gripped tightly onto his brother. His hands were beginning to shake and he felt really light headed. Ludwig didn’t even try to stop crying, nothing felt like it mattered now. He experienced the relief of a lifetime, remembering the face and the name of somebody who plagued him peacefully for months now.

Only to find he was gone.

“I don’t know, Luddy. I don’t know.”

Epilogue

It was a clear day today. Ludwig was enjoying himself as much as he could, given his position. He sat on the dry rocks, feet in the water that rushed up to meet him, hands in his pockets, and his eyes closed with his face tilted up to the sun. The seagulls weren't even squawking from their pesky daily tasks of annoying everybody around them. It wasn't humid, or at least by a person who lived by the sea's standard of not humid, and the air smelled like, shockingly, the sea. The weather was nice, but the man sitting on the rocks did not care. Something was troubling the man, and more specifically, his memories were.

A sigh escaped the lips of Ludwig Beilschmidt.

His didn't seem very fair. He had the money and the loving family that he could possibly need in his life, his brother proved his loyalty to him long ago, loving pets that would serve their entire life to making him feel happy and in return got love, and had even made a friend through hanging out at a bar with his brother, Kiku. He was even able to go out more and be able to socialize with his two friends.

But while Kiku and Gilbert were fantastic, he still missed his parents. And, of course, obviously, of course, Feliciano. Sadly enough, he couldn't remember all of the things of Feliciano or what they had done during the time they had together. It was like trying to find a fanfiction with a certain plot that you had no knowledge of the plot nor that the author deleted it You could google it as much as you'd like, you'd only be left with certain parts in your mind that truly stuck out to you when you never found it. And Ludwig, like most of us has experienced, could not find the fanfiction.

If he tried very hard and concentrated for hours on end, he would be able to recall the face. The face was the hardest part to remember of Feliciano, the easiest being his smile and his laugh. Ludwig had tried to draw the face that he could barely remember, but he was never very good at art to begin with and after a couple of attempts, gave up. After all, nobody could recreate that type of beauty.

Basically, he wasn't able to remember anything of Feliciano. He could remember his laughter, the way he said his name, and vague parts that stuck out to him. Otherwise, he was forgotten. But luckily, Ludwig would never let Feli be forgotten. Not as long as he lived, and he planned on living for a long, long time.

Three years ago, after Gilbert helped him remember Feliciano, when they came home from the memorable beach trip, the two brothers sat down in their living room to talk about everything. Gilbert, being mature enough for once, told him everything that happened that he knew of between them.

"Who knows, bro, you might've lost your virginity to a fish!"

Gilbert had a black eye for a little bit after that, but what Ludwig got was so much more.

During the months that Ludwig was refusing to go to the beach, Gilbert went down himself to tell the bad news to Feliciano. Feli hadn't taken it very well, and made Gilbert swear to come back, promising to be back the next day. Needless to say, both parties made it the next day, Feli waiting for him on the beach. When Gilbert went up to him, Feli shoved something to him, red faced.

"Make sure to give this to Luddy, I want him to have it!"

Gilbert took the object in his hand and ran his fingers over the rough yet smooth surface. The object itself looked and felt like a shell would, but it was blue and faded to purple. At the end of it was splash of yellow on it. The shell had bits of sand on it and smelt deeply of the sea, which Gilbert figured was normal, and looked up at Feliciano with a confused look on his face. "What is this suppose to be? It looks like a-"

"It's a shell, silly. It's actually my favorite shell, this is what I feel every time I'm with Luddy. All colorful and warm. See, if you squeeze it in your hand like this," the surprisingly warm hands of Feli wrapped around Gilbert's and curled the fingers shut. "All warm inside. I think that's what love is, no?"

Feli made him swear on his grave, after what that was explained, that he would give it to Ludwig when he remembered him. Gilbert promised and delivered through after he remembered. And now that was his most prized possession, taking place even over his parent's last family photo, which hung next to the shell on his dresser.

No, Feli was far from being forgotten, but he was also a long way from being remembered too. In time, Ludwig hoped, he would be fully remembered, but until then-

SPLASH

Ludwig's head snapped towards the sound. Something far out from sea had just jumped from a wave. No dolphins or fish could've done that, this wasn't the right season for that type of stuff. It was only March after all. So that meant…

"Feli? Feliciano?!" Ludwig stood up with his heart in his throat. "Is that you? Feli?" His breath was gone, could this really be the moment when he would finally re-meet the love of his dreams? "Feliciano?"

The top of a head rose from the surface of the waves, almost hesitant.

"Feliciano?"

It'd be the tenth anniversary of Gilbert's passing in a few weeks. Ludwig sipped at his tea, wondering if he should do something special for his brother's death day. Maybe he could paint him a crude picture of his favorite bird. What was the bird's blasted name? Wasn't it something like a pun? He could barely remember. Ludwig was after all nearing the steep age of seventy in a few months.

Those were the days, if he could recall. He could recall less and less everyday, his brain was slowing down these days. But when he was in love with the only person his life would allow,

Feliciano, he felt like nothing could stop him. Those days were the best days of his life and like all good things, they came to an end. Feliciano was dead. The memory stung at him when he remembered it.

The head looked at Ludwig and swam closer to him. Ludwig was sure that he never met this guy, it looked nothing like Feli, but responded to the name like it was a slap in the face. Eventually the two were close enough that if Ludwig squatted down, he would be able to see him properly and talk to him without shouting.

"You know Feliciano," the voice stated in wonder. "You must be the amazing Ludwig, no?"

Maybe he could go surfing today. He had been very keen on that sport out of all the water sports. It was like gliding on the water's natural waves. It didn't affect any lives like scuba diving when he did that thirty years ago. Besides, the oxygen tanks ran out of oxygen too fast. There was simply too much to see, the colors, the fish, everything. Now he knew that Feliciano would love it if the two of them could just swim down there.

Gilbert told him that Feli would talk about the two of them doing something together, but they never truly got the chance to do something like that.

When Ludwig rose out of his chair, he tried to ignore the cracking noise his bones made. He tried in vain to ignore the noises that his chest was making when he was coughing after he rose as well, but it wasn't very easy to ignore the pain that your chest makes. He lived the last six decades learning all about that.

"Feliciano would talk about you all the time," the merman that was now known as Antonio told Ludwig. The two moved down to the beach where both of them could comfortably sit and talk. "He was so scared that you would never remember him."

"That's the thing though, I was hoping that I could talk to him. I miss him and I," Ludwig trailed off at the look that Antonio was giving him. "What? What is it?"

"Ludwig," Antonio swallowed. "The reason why I'm here now is because Feliciano wanted to come back down here every now and then. I wanted to honor that promise we made him and return, but the others wouldn't come with me. They said it was too hard."

"Why would it be too hard? Is it hard to swim?"

The, now white haired, German brought his old surfboard and loaded it into the bed of his old truck. It was too much of a hassle to walk the mile down everyday. His truck would work just as well and gave him a place to rest without worrying about drowning, regardless of him mastering the art of swimming long ago.

It was a nice day outside that day, just like the one with...Antonio? That sounded right. Just like the day with Antonio the merman, Feli's friend. He would never forget that conversation that took place, it truly changed his life after it. Ludwig relapsed into depression for months and the only thing that shook him from it was Gilbert's idea of living for Feli. Go and explore the world that they had shared at one point, go into the water, get involved in life. Feli would've wanted it for Ludwig.

After he put the board into the truck, Ludwig watched with exasperation. He was really tired, would he even be able to surf today? He felt like he could just take a nap all day long and not miss a thing. He probably wouldn't anyway, he didn't do much except sleep or surf anyway. Plus, all his friends either moved away or died, he didn't hang out with anybody anyway.

"W...what do you mean? He can't be dead! He's suppose to come and see me, you said so!"

As much as it pained him, he decided to sleep instead of going to surf that day. As much as it hurt him, he couldn't go today. His knees were hurting anyway.

"I'm sorry, Ludwig, really. But he's not coming back."

His bones creaked along with the stairs as he clambered upstairs to his bedroom. He could have a nice snooze until two o'clock, that's when his favorite World War Two movie came on and he wanted to watch it. It was Fantastic with a capital 'f.'

"You are LYING!"

His bones finally relaxed when he returned to his plush white pillows. They didn't even rattle when he yawned one of his bigger yawns that meant he would be missing his program. Ah, well, with technology today he would simply be able to rewind the channel to watch it. If nothing else, he could just pick up a book from a pile of things from World War Two to read something about it.

Ludwig looked at himself in the mirror that had been attached to his dresser as a kid. His face had grown wrinkled, along with the rest of his body. His muscles had faded away, though some still remained with him. His hair had retreated to the back of his head, leaving a shiny spot of skin. It had also turned to a soft glowing white. In the sunlight it beamed off in waves of new light that made his tired eyes blink. The only thing that remained the same were the striking blue eyes of Ludwig's that dazed the brown ones that he yearned to see again.

"Maybe if I finally go to sleep, I'll see them," he yawned to himself and rolled over on his side. "Then I'll be happy at last."

The old German man dug his head into his pillow and shut his eyes, not even bothering to take off his glasses this time. He was much too tired for a simple task such as that. It made him shudder and sputter out a cough, at least that's what he thought. The darkness slowly crept up on him, coming closer and closer, then taking him all at once.

His dream today was again, on the beach. This time it was the beach somewhere else though, which was weird. Everyday for the past forty-nine years had been on the beach he lived so close by, the beach where he met Feliciano, the beach where he was the happiest he had ever been. This beach, however, had a totally different layout with even more beautiful water that dazzled the eyes. The beach glimmered with amazing shells, glistening in the sunlight.

His sky blue eyes shifted upwards to the sky and blinked back in it's amazing sight. There were clouds, but the perfect clouds. They were puffed up just right and had been spread apart as if there were a ruler involved that wanted everything in order. The sky even bared a

rainbow that shown not only once, but twice through the sky. A double rainbow, something that Ludwig had never seen before.

The eyes returned to the ground where a couple of trees were crossed and had a hammock tied to their trunks. It was the classic netted hammock that hung between the palm trees, the only thing missing was the little drink with the umbrella. The trees were surrounded by pure white sand, things so commonly missed these days with pollution.

But regardless, he was still there and was still imagining something that would make it even better. Feliciano Vargas jumping through the water with a smile on the distinguished face. In fact, Ludwig could actually make out the face this time through the sleep's dream. He smiled softly, it had been quite a while since he was able to see it, and had solely missed it.

The soft brown hair bobbed slightly when the man stopped moving around in the water and turned towards Ludwig. "Luddy!" The chiming voice called out, making his heart throb. The merman stuck his arm up, showing him the fin that was on his arm. This dream was very detailed, Ludwig came to realize a minute or so after watching his love. He had forgotten some of the details on his body. Like the exact shade of the tail and fins, or how Feli had the hair curl.

This dream was very lucid, in fact. He could feel the entire surrounding area. He was able to smell the scent of what smelled like fresh cookies in the air. Ludwig was able to run his hand over the sand to feel every grain move underneath it, the heat it was giving off. Was it…?

"Luddy, come on, I've been waiting for you!" Feli laughed the most adorable laugh that he hadn't heard in a long, long time. "Aren't you coming?"

Ludwig sighed and stood up, rising to a height he forgot he had when he was twenty-something. "Gimme a second," he called back. A confused look replaced his already slightly concerned one. His voice actually rumbled in his throat, something that he felt when he was actually speaking. He lifted his hands to see the wrinkle-free version of them that he only saw in dreams. His arms had the muscles still attached to them that disappeared years ago. Everything looked like it did when he was with Feliciano before he died.

Was this truly a dream? Because if it wasn't that meant…

"Feliciano?" Ludwig hesitantly called out. "Is this real?"

"Of course, silly." Feliciano giggled. "Everything should be real. I'm here after all." He smiled as though that helped Ludwig figure out what was going on.

"But where are we?"

"Heaven, of course!"

"Heaven?" Ludwig stammered out. Was this really…?

"Sure! What do you think the afterlife is called? I guess you could call it Paradise or something else, but that's what I call it at least!"

"The...afterlife?" Ludwig blinked. "But I just fell asleep to take a nap."

Feli splashed some water around with his arms. "Well, yeah, but…" he trailed off and looked back up at him with teary brown eyes that almost broke Ludwig's heart to see. "Do you not want to see me again?"

Ludwig only had to wait a second before breaking out into the water and wrapping his strong, forever strong, arms around the body. He squeezed the now laughing body tightly with them and kissed the top of the brown hair, feeling the other's arms wrap around him. Nothing ever felt so good, nothing could ever replace the feeling he got when he wrapped his arms around the most precious thing in his life that had been missing for majority of it.

"I've waited my life to see you again, liebe."

He forgot what it felt like to hold him, he forgot what it felt like to smell his salty hair, he forgot everything that should never be forgotten. But at the same time he was glad, he was finally able to see Feliciano again. And this time, while the two made new memories together, he would remember the old.

And what better way to start off forever than by a kiss?

High Tides, something that brought in a merman when he was looking for shells. Something that changed the life of two destined beings for the better.

The End.

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